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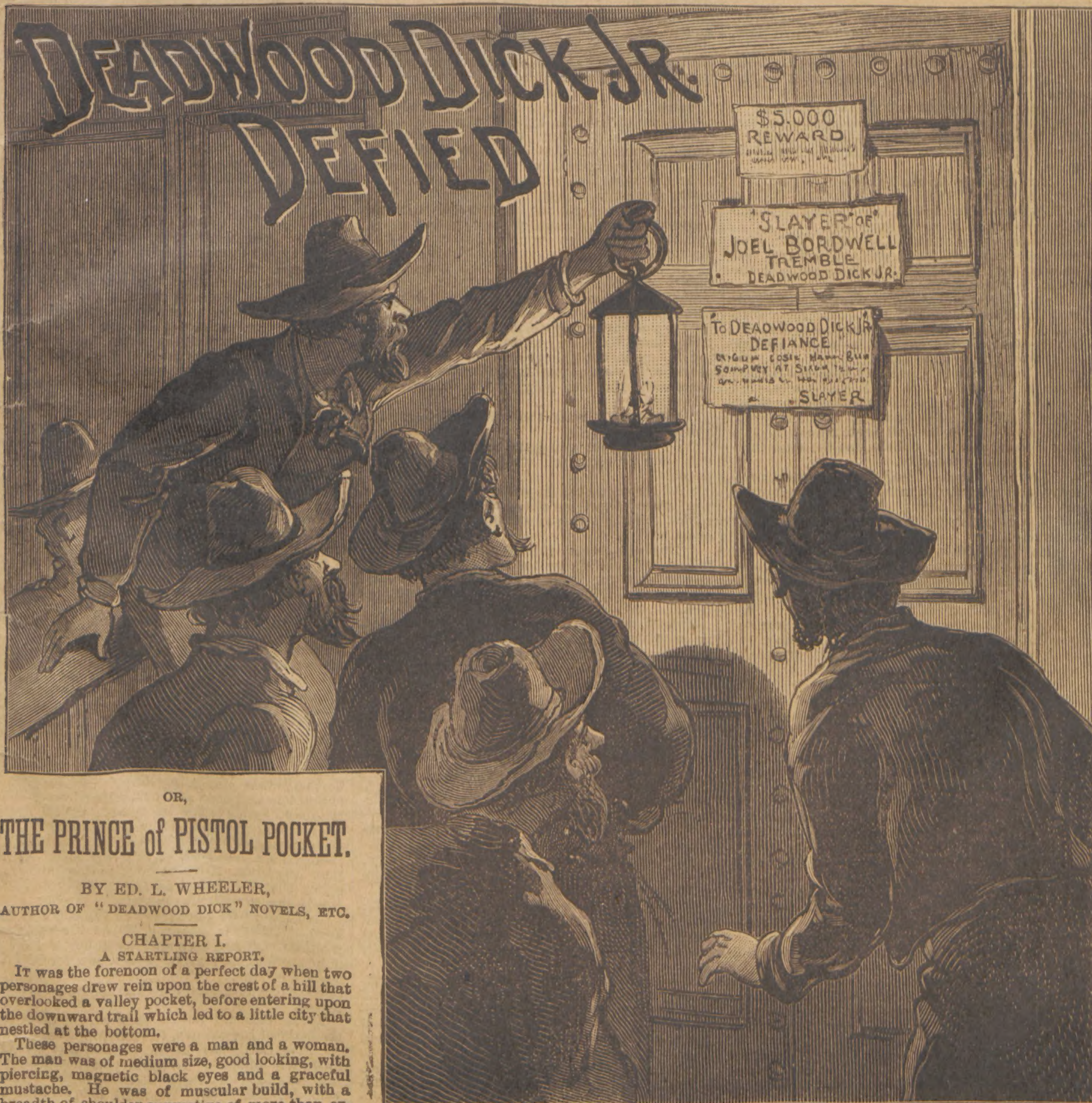
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OR, THE PRINCE of PISTOL POCKET.

BY ED. L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A STARTLING REPORT.

It was the forenoon of a perfect day when two personages drew rein upon the crest of a hill that overlooked a valley pocket, before entering upon the downward trail which led to a little city that nestled at the bottom.

These personages were a man and a woman. The man was of medium size, good looking, with piercing, magnetic black eyes and a graceful mustache. He was of muscular build, with a breadth of shoulder suggestive of more than ordinary strength. In point of age he did not look to be a day over thirty.

PRESENTLY ONE MAN ADVANCED WITH A LANTERN. AND AT ONCE THE NOTICE
WAS PLAIN TO BE READ BY ALL.

H. W. PRAY,
Norwood, R. I.

The woman was younger by four or five years, her face shining or reflecting the man's resolute countenance, while her demeanor was suggestive of one who was a stranger to fear. Both were well mounted, and as they drew rein there in the bright sunlight they were outlined against the sky, a picture perfect in every part. An observer would have pronounced them brother and sister, but such they were not, for they were even more closely bound, being man and wife.

No strangers, they, to us, for, upon looking again, we recognize Richard Bristol—Deadwood Dick, Jr., and Kate—brave Kodak Kate, his wife.

Many weeks have passed—indeed some months—since we saw them last.

Dick's health was fully recovered, and he had never looked better in his life. A long sojourn in Southern California, after a terrible northern campaign which nearly cost him his life, had mended him as good as new.

They gazed for some moments upon the scene before either spoke. There was an expression of sadness upon Deadwood Dick's face, as recollections of the past rushed upon him, and his mind's vision saw again the exciting scenes through which he had passed in that very valley.

"And this is Pistol Pocket?" Kate presently questioned.

"Yes, this is the place," Dick answered. "And great is the change since I saw it last, now more than three years ago."

"It has grown, then?"

"Yes; so that I hardly recognize it as the same spot."

"And you have told me it is all your own."

"Every foot of land there did belong to me, Kate, but my agent has sold a good deal of it. Still, full three-quarters of the Pocket is mine."

"And this is to be our home?"

"Yes, dear."

They were silent again, each looking with differing emotions upon the little city.

Presently they went on, wending their way adown the precipitous pathway toward this growing city which bore the same name as the valley in which it was situated.

Pistol Pocket had changed greatly since Deadwood Dick looked upon it last. And its growth had been of the solid and substantial order, too. Where shanties had stood were now imposing structures of wood and stone.

The Grand Pacific Hotel had been still further enlarged, to keep pace with the times, and probably could still lay claim to being the finest in the Territory. The buildings of the Majestic Mine, Dick's mine, had all been rebuilt upon a larger scale, and everywhere was the same indication of solid prosperity.

"Yes, the place is mine," Dick repeated, presently, and partly to himself. "I wonder what my reception will be?"

"You intend going in without disguise, I see," observed Kate.

"Ha!" and Dick drew rein suddenly, "that gives me a thought. 'I believe I will disguise, and I'm glad you mentioned it. We cannot be seen here. I'll see how things are going before I make myself known.'"

It took but a few minutes to adjust a wig and beard so that detection would not be easy, and Dick was transformed into a man of middle age.

They had a brief understanding, while this was being done, concerning the characters they were to assume.

Continuing on their way, Dick gave Kate a brief outline of the history of the place.

"Yes, it is mine," he repeated. "I discovered the pocket, and settled here with her who was then my wife. I built the first house in the valley. We were taken sick, she and I, and were here alone and helpless. Nola died, and two days later a company of stampedeers came and jumped my claim. To get rid of me, they put me in a boat, the body of my wife with me, and sent me adrift down the creek."

"Horrible!" ejaculated Kate, "with a shiver."

"The word does not half express it," answered Dick. "But, I warned them what the result would be if I escaped with my life; and, I did escape. I returned, and my reprisal was complete. The wretches who had shown no mercy received none at my hands. When I took my leave the pocket contained nothing but smoking ruins. When I returned again, this time with the documents to prove my sole proprietary rights, another city had sprung up out of the ashes of the first, and again I had to fight for my own. But, victory was mine, and at last my proprietorship was acknowledged."

"And now?" queried Kate.

"Now, my manager, Sir Clyde Carleton, is at

the head of affairs here, and of late he has been urging me to come and relieve him of some of his responsibility. He assures me I am a millionaire, and by the looks of things I do not doubt it. But, I care nothing for wealth, except for the good I may be able to do with it. Were I as rich again I would continue my warfare against evil-doers of every kind and stripe, according to the oath I registered at the beginning of my career. Wealth will only strengthen my arm, and nothing but death will ever stop me in this crusade against crime. Sometimes I have erred, and my record is not exactly what I would make it could I live the past over again, but my purpose has been ever the same."

Leisurely they rode, and finally came down upon the valley level and headed toward the principal street of the city.

As Dick had said, he could hardly recognize it as the same place. Evidences of his wealth were on every hand. There were telephone and telegraph wires; there was a splendid electric light equipment; and a double line of electric cars ran the whole length of the valley through the main street.

The town looked, in brief, as if it were a solid piece of Denver, or some such city, which had been taken up bodily and transported thither. And yet, withal, it still had the air of a breezy mining-camp, and the rough-clad denizens of such a camp were to be seen everywhere rubbing elbows with men of finer garb. Back against the inclosing hills, at the north side of the pocket, were shanties innumerable.

Dick and his wife drew rein in front of the Grand Pacific Hotel, and were immediately the center of curious attention.

Seated in a big chair near the door of the main entrance was Joe Garry, the proprietor, whom Dick recognized instantly. He appeared to be the same Joe, and his looks bespoke prosperity and contentment.

Prince Richard got out of the saddle with the deliberation of a man of his apparent years, and assisted Kate to dismount; an employee of the hotel was quickly on hand to take charge of their horses, and to him Dick gave orders that they be put up and well cared for.

Then the travelers entered the hostelry, and presently Dick made his appearance at the office for the purpose of registering.

He found that Garry afforded the luxury of a regular clerk, but the proprietor made his appearance in person just as Dick was inquiring concerning the best lodging the house could offer him.

"You say you want the best, sir?" Garry inquired.

"The very best you have, sir," assured Dick. "A suite of rooms on the next floor, front, if possible."

"All right; we can fix you out with just what you are after. Give the gentleman the corner rooms, Jim. Do you expect to remain a week or so, sir?"

"Maybe a good deal longer," answered Dick. "Just set your figure for a fortnight, and I'll pay in advance. That will make us feel easy all around, for money is the best recommendation."

This offer made Dick "solid" at once, and the price being fixed upon, and the money paid over, he proceeded to register.

He was playing his assumed character to perfection, and his friend Garry had never a suspicion.

When Dick laid down the pen Garry glanced at the register and read:

"WILLARD MARBLEHEAD AND WIFE,
Washington, D. C."

"You're a long ways from home. Mr. Marblehead," he remarked.

"Yes, a few leagues," was the jesting response. "You have quite a city here, I find."

"Oh, yes, we're growing," declared Garry. "We've got on our long pants now, and if we keep on I guess we'll get there by and by."

Bristol smiled as he withdrew to regain his wife. He had found Garry the same as he had known him in the other days, and anticipated his surprise when he came to make himself known.

When Dick had left the office a rather handsome young man sauntered up to the desk and looked at the name just inscribed. He was apparently under thirty years of age, of good figure and presence, and was well dressed and looked to be a sport.

"Willard Marblehead, eh?" he remarked. "That's an imposing name, and the man looks to be one of the old substantial. So, the woman is his wife, is she? What do you imagine

has brought them away out here, Mr. Garry? I'll wager they never made the trip for pleasure. That fellow has got business on the brain, sure as you are a living sinner."

"I give it up without trying," Garry made response.

"And he seems to be well fixed for pocket-money," the sport added. "Maybe he has come here with the idea of opening a game, with his wife as the fair card-queen of the concern. If my guess proves correct, I think I'll be among his first customers, just to see if I can't change my luck. The fair goddess seems to have turned her back upon me, you know, and a fellow must drive away at something for an honest living. Ha, ha!"

"It don't strike me the man is in that line, Phil," Garry rejoined. "I'd sooner guess he's here to buy a mine."

The sport, Phil Harley by name, but better known as "Poker Phil," was about to make further remarks, but was prevented by the sudden entrance of an excited man.

"The devil's to pay now," the man cried.

"What's the matter?" asked Joe Garry.

"Why, Bristol's bank has been robbed and the cashier killed."

Every man who heard the words sprung to his feet in greatest excitement, eager to learn all about it.

"When did it happen?" asked Poker Phil.

"Have they got hold of the robber yet?"

"No; he's give 'em the slip," the man answered, putting the last question first. "It has just been found out, and it couldn't 'a' happened more'n half an hour ago, at most."

Every man of them hastened out to the piazza and looked up the street in the direction of the bank building, where they saw the street was black with people, and without waiting to ask further questions Joe Garry, Poker Phil, and others, hastened to the spot.

CHAPTER II.

THE MYSTERIOUS MURDER.

THE report the man had brought to the hotel was true. A daring robbery had been committed, to which had been added the more terrible crime of assassination.

It was barely ten minutes since the crime had been first discovered, yet so dense was the crowd of men and women in the street that when Joe Garry and the others arrived they found it almost impossible to get through.

This bank of Pistol Pocket was a private concern, managed by Sir Clyde Carleton in the interest of his employer, Richard Bristol. It was doing an immense amount of business, and the cashier had been a thoroughly competent man named Joel Bordwell, greatly respected by all who knew him.

The story of the discovery of the crime was known to the crowd, and was being told and retold constantly, so Garry and the others just arrived got the particulars without asking a question.

A little time before a well-known citizen had entered the bank to transact some business, and not seeing the cashier had called his name. Getting no response, he had looked behind the inclosure, and there to his horror had discovered Bordwell lying on the floor in a pool of blood.

Stepping to the door, this man gave the alarm at once, and as soon as others came in an examination was made. The cashier had been struck upon the head with some blunt weapon that had crushed in his skull and killed him instantly, and the safe had been robbed of all the money in sight that could be easily carried off, a sum said to have aggregated many thousand dollars.

No clew was found, thus far, and the whole daring affair was a mystery. No suspicious characters had been seen around, and no one had been seen to leave the bank with undue haste. In fact, no one could be found who had seen any one entering or leaving the bank recently. But, then, no one had been paying any attention in that direction, so there was nothing strange about that. It looked as though the miscreant would escape with his plunder.

Sir Clyde, who was mayor of the city and the head of things in general, was at the mines at the time, and had been sent for in haste. He was now coming, and room was made for him to reach the bank.

"What is this I am told?" he demanded, on entering.

The truth could not be doubted, for there lay the body of the cashier, terrible proof indeed.

"Poor Bordwell!" the mayor and manager immediately added. "To think you should meet a fate like this! Is there no clew to the wretch who did this deed? We must not let him escape."

"There does not seem to be any clew at all, sir," responded the man who had been the first to discover the crime. "The object was robbery, as you see by the empty safe, and the fellow has managed to get away, unseen. The chances are that he is likely to go free."

"Good heavens, Kellock, he must not escape! He hasn't had time to get out of the Pocket yet, and he must be discovered and arrested! I'll proclaim a reward for his arrest, immediately."

Hastening to a window, Carleton stood up in it and waved the crowd to silence, when he said:

"Men of Pistol Pocket, a hellish deed has been done here. Poor Joel Bordwell has been foully murdered, and the assassin must not escape. I will give five thousand dollars to the man who will find and arrest him."

A shout greeted the words, and not a person in the crowd but was eager to earn the reward, and not alone for the reward's sake, either, for, as has been stated, the cashier had been respected by all, and had rendered friendly service to more than one man in Pistol Pocket.

Sir Clyde stepped down from the window and took a careful look about the room, hoping that something might fall under his notice that would prove a clew to the finding out of the assassin.

"It is too bad Mr. Bristol is not here," he said. "This is something which he could handle better than any one else."

"Yes, it is too bad he isn't here," agreed the discoverer. "When do you expect him?"

"At any time, now. He may come by one of the stages to-day."

"It is to be hoped he will."

Pistol Pocket had now two stages each way daily, running between the city and the nearest railroad point.

The first of these was due to arrive a little before noon, while the other came in about six o'clock in the evening. Outward bound, one left about seven in the morning and the other about two in the afternoon.

A careful inspection of the bank was made by the mayor and the discoverer, whose name was Dunbar Kellock, but without bringing any clew to light, and a shadow appeared to settle down over the mystery—a shadow which seemed to defy penetration. It had been a bold and successful piece of villainy.

When all had been done that could be done, the body of the murdered man was carried away, and the bank was closed for the rest of that day at least, a notice to that effect being put up on the door, together with a written offer of reward for the arrest of the murderer. The crowd dispersed, then, but the excitement had not abated, and woe to the murderer if these citizens of Pistol Pocket caught him.

In the mean time Deadwood Dick and Kate had been watching the crowd from the windows of their front room, and by listening to the talk in the street they learned the cause of the excitement.

"It seems here is a case for you at once upon your arrival, Dick," Kate remarked.

"Yes, it appears so," Dick acquiesced. "I'll hold back a little, though, so as not to awaken any suspicion as to who I am."

"Do you know the man who has been killed?"

"No; he was a man of Carleton's selection for the office."

"Are you sure, Dick, that your man Carleton is to be trusted as you trust him?"

"He is as true as gold, Kate. Do you suppose I would have remained away from here so long unless I had perfect confidence in him?"

"I merely mentioned it as a thought. Trusted men have failed before, you know. But, I am aware how good your judgment is, so I accept your view of the matter, the more readily as I have never seen this man."

"After you have seen him you may give me your impression."

"I will not fail to do so, be it good or bad. By the way, I do not see anything of your old crony and the young man."

"You mean Avalanche and Billy?"

"Yes."

"They are no doubt here, for that was arranged when we took our leave of them to go to the coast. No doubt they are working in some capacity about the mine, or elsewhere. You remember I gave them a letter to Carleton."

"Very likely you are right; and, here is another thought: If you desire to remain unknown here, I shall have to keep out of their sight, for they would recognize me at once, of course. I shall not be a great deal out of the hotel, however, and when I am out, I can veil myself."

"Yes, that will do well enough. Hal there is Carleton, now, speaking to the crowd from the window."

They could see what was going on plainly enough, but were too far away to hear what was said, so they waited for further developments.

Finally, when the crowd began to disperse, Dick remarked:

"Here comes Garry, now, and I'll go down to the piazza and learn all about it from him."

Leaving Kate he went down, and was on the almost-deserted piazza when Joe Garry, Phil Harley and others, came up.

"What's the excitement, Mr. Garry?" Dick inquired.

Joe drew up a chair and sat down beside Dick, giving him the facts of the case as they have been made known.

"And it's a pity Dick Bristol isn't here about this time, too," he wound up by saying.

"And who is Dick Bristol?" Dick inquired, as though he had never heard the name in his life.

"Why, he's the man who owns this city, or the biggest part of it. He is the owner of the robbed bank, and he owns the mines here, too."

"Yes?"

"Yes. He is known everywhere as Deadwood Dick, Junior. Maybe you have heard of him by that name."

"Seems to me I have heard that name before, somewhere. What sort of man is this Deadwood Dick? What could he do if he were here? since from what you have said the matter is a mystery to you all."

"What could he do? Mr. Marblehead, he is one of the greatest detectives in this country or any other. That's his business. He doesn't do anything else, and when he sets out to hunt down a rascal he never lets up till he gets him dead to rights. He is just a holy terror—that is what!"

"And you say he owns this place. He must be well off in this world's goods, I venture to say."

"He's a good deal more than well off. He's a millionaire, and nothing short of it. Why, that mine of his is pouring two thousand dollars a day into his pockets, and that's over and above expenses, too."

"Whew!"

The whistle of surprise was genuine, and it escaped Dick involuntarily.

While he had known the mine was a paying one, he had no idea it was yielding profits so large as that.

There was little wonder, he fully realized, that Sir Clyde had wanted him to come and relieve him of some of his responsibility. What would he ever be able to do with so much wealth?

"Makes you whistle, does it?" observed Garry, laughing. "Well, it's the fact all the same."

"And where is this Deadwood Dick now?" Dick inquired.

"Why, he has been away from here three years or more, but he is expected to drop in any day now. He's been north lately, where he got into a scrimmage that almost used him up, and for some time he's been down on the coast, so his manager says."

"His manager must be a trusted man, to be left so long in charge of such a big business, I should think."

"So he is, and he deserves to be, too, for Sir Clyde Carleton is a gentleman born, and as upright and honest as the sun. I'll bet he will account for every penny as straight as a string when Dick returns. There he comes now."

As he spoke he pointed up the street, where Sir Clyde and Dunbar Kellock were to be seen walking down in the direction of the hotel. It was near stage-time, and Carleton was coming to meet it, with the hope that Deadwood Dick might be one of the passengers. Of all men, the mayor desired most to see him.

CHAPTER III.

AN OFFER OF SERVICES.

MAYOR CARLETON and Dunbar Kellock ascended the steps to the piazza, where they helped themselves to the inviting chairs that were free to all.

"Yes, it puzzles me greatly," Sir Clyde was saying. "We have some men in this camp who are not angels by any means, I know, but I cannot name one who, I think, would have the daring to do a deed like this, or the heart to kill poor Bordwell."

"It is a terrible mystery, true enough; and the worst of it is, there is no clew. If we could only have found anything to work upon, something might be done. I tell you I was almost overcome with horror, Mr. Carleton, when I made the discovery as I did."

"I do not doubt it, Mr. Kellock; it was enough to horrify any man."

"We could hardly believe the report, when

the news reached us here," put in Phil Harley, or Poker Phil, at this point.

He had returned with Joe Garry, as shown, but up to this time had not spoken, having been listening to the conversation between Garry and Deadwood Dick—or, as he was then known—Willard Marblehead.

"The same with me, when the man brought the information to me at the mine," added Sir Clyde. "I only hope Bristol will come by this stage; maybe he will be able to run the fiend down and bring him to account. If any man on earth can do it, he is the man."

"Then, with you, I certainly hope he will come," declared Mr. Kellock.

This man Kellock had been some months in the young city, and had made a favorable impression. He was about forty-five years of age, to judge by his looks, a good talker, and rather engaging in manner.

That he was a person of some means was evident, for he had been stopping at the Grand Pacific, where he paid his bills promptly, though he was never seen to do any business, other than some speculating in real estate. He had bought some lots of Carleton shortly after coming to the place, and had disposed of one or two of them to some advantage.

It was his intention, he had announced more than once, to wait until he was certain the railroad would run a spur to the city; then he would put up and open one of the best and biggest general stores in the Territory.

The railroad spur, by the way, was much talked about, and would have been built ere this, no doubt, but for the fact that a big tunnel would have to be bored before it could strike into Pretty Pass and so make its way to the Pocket.

There was but one entrance to the Pocket besides the narrow foot trail mentioned in our opening chapter, and that was through a deep and narrow pass known as the Pretty Pass. Here, (as readers of previous stories may recall) had been the toll-gate kept by Mountain Mose, and also the hotel Mose,—now things of the past and rarely spoken of.

On this day the stage was late, for some reason or other, probably because the train had been late, and the noon whistle at the mines sounded before it appeared in sight.

While the men on the piazza were keeping up their conversation, which had now become general, an old man was seen making his way down from the direction of the mines, and upon reaching the steps of the piazza he stopped short and cried out:

"Great currogated old hambone o' devastatin' demolishun what discouraged the sinners o' Ninnivy when old Joner pitched into 'em hip an' thigh and smote 'em over the thatches to impress 'em properly— Yea, great hambone o' Hamtown, what is this I hear? A murder in this hyer city o' Pistol Pocket! Signs o' demolishun! where is Deadwood Dicky this blessed minnit?"

He it was, Old Avalanche the invincible!

He had been some time at Pistol Pocket, now, and coming recommended from Deadwood Dick, had been given some light employment at the mine for which he received good pay.

It was the same with Billy Bucket, by the way. He was employed in the office where he and Johnny Smile, whose name many of our readers will recall, had by this time become quite attached to each other, since in their attachment and devotion to Deadwood Dick they had a mutual bond of affinity.

The old scout was by this time known to everybody in the camp except the latest arrivals, and those on the piazza smiled at his quaint and vigorous language.

"I have some hope that Mr. Bristol will come by the stage to-day," Sir Clyde made response to him.

"Circulatin' currogashuns o' perambulatin' abobinashuns! et is to be hoped he will; hambone, yes! Hyer the cloven hoof has showed itself in this hyer Parrydise of ours, and if Richard was ever wanted bad he is [wanted that way now. Mister Carleton, I have been lookin' around to find you, to tell ye that the old man don't work any more till this hyer matter is cleared up and the pizen critter what slewed poor Bordwell is hanged higher than Ha—Ha—Ham— Yes, higher than hambone, by the signs o' demolishun!"

"All right, old friend; suit yourself about that," the manager acquiesced.

Deadwood Dick was smiling to himself at the earnestness the old scout was manifesting.

The others were laughing, and Old Avalanche was about to say something further but just then the stage was seen coming down the valley, and into the street.

"Whoa!" sung out the Jehu, as he drew rein in front of the Grand Pacific and brought his six horses up all standing. "What's the 'citement, citizens. 'Most everybody looks as if there had been a funeral in camp purty soon."

Such was his quaint way of putting it, and while his question was being answered his passengers alighted from the "hearse."

Among these were two in whom we may take interest.

The first of these was a nervous, fussy little man in black, with a silk hat that looked as if it had seen service before the war.

The next, whom the little man assisted, was a woman. She was past the bloom of youth, had red hair and a sharp nose, and, when she spoke, it was discovered that she had a voice as harsh as "filing a saw."

At first sight these were taken to be man and wife, and more than one person in the crowd felt his heart going out in sympathy to the man; but the woman speaking almost at once set them right on that point. It was seen that the man was in the woman's employ in some capacity or other.

"Simon Singletree!" the woman called out, as soon as her feet touched the ground.

The little man was seen to give a start that was almost a jump, as the harsh voice sounded.

"Yes, Mrs. Grandis," he responded.

"Insist upon my having one of the best rooms in the house," the woman gave directions. "Insist upon it, I say; and see to it that you register my name in full."

"Yes, ma'am; I will see to it all."

"Your arm, sir!"

The little man gave another start, and then promptly recovered and gave his arm to the woman and escorted her up the steps and into the house, while the other passengers were getting down and out.

"See that 'ar pair, boys?" observed the driver, jerking his thumb in the direction of the door.

The boys had seen them.

"Waal, that woman's a posy, she is, and don't you forget it. She's lookin' fer a truant husband, and Lord help the man when she finds him is all I have ter say. Et seems he got up an' dusted out, but she's bound ter have him back ergain ef thar is sech a thing as layin' hands on him."

Said one man:

"Et ain't ter be wondered at that he got out, fer ef that voice o' hers is so mighty gratin' in a calm, what must et be in a storm? Jest imagine that 'ar red ha'r up on end, that 'ar sharp nose white at the tip, and that 'ar voice jest a-sawin' ther welkin into ribbons at every twirl of her tongue, an' tell me whar's the mortal man that wouldn't git up an' git."

"Great devarsified hambone, yes!" supplemented Old Avalanche. "Tell us whar is the mortal man that would want ter stand et. Not the ragin' old Injun eppydemick, you kin bet on that. Signs o' demolishum, no! I had all I wanted when I used to dance to the tune of Sal Samantha, and ef she was a stinger with her tongue you kin bet this one ain't fur behind the bush in that same respect. Missus Grandis, ef that man you ar' lookin' for has got ary grain o' hoss sense he'll keep mighty mum."

Dick smiled to himself as he listened and the recollection of the old scout's matrimonial venture came to mind.

The last passenger was now out, and with an air of disappointment Sir Clyde said:

"Well, he didn't come. I wish he had, for he is needed."

"No, he was certainly not among that lot," agreed Joe Garry.

"Unless," added the mayor and manager, "he is in disguise, just for a joke."

"Great disjinted old hambone what currogated ther inner workin's of Joner!" cried Old Avalanche.

With the words he snatched off his ragged old hat and gave his leg a slap with it, and Garry inquired what had struck him.

"That's jest the idee!" he declared. "Dicky is in disguise, jest fer a leetle joke, and that feller in the old high hat is him, sure's I'm a-shout-in' et."

"Impossible," Carleton declared.

"Currogated cans o' discombobberated demolishum! why is et impossible?" the old man demanded. "That same Deadwood Dicky can change himself into shapess o' mighty onimagina-ble that his own mammy wouldn't know him."

"Yes, but he couldn't shrivel himself up at will," disputed Garry.

At that the old man scratched his head.

"Besides," reminded Sir Clyde, "you have seen his wife and would certainly know her."

"I don't know whether I would or not," ad-

mitted the old scout, "for she is next to Dicky himself at that disguisin' business; but that last argyment is 'most a clincher, fer I don't believe Katie could git up a voice like that if she tried—great old hambone, no!"

"No, it is plain they didn't come," said Carleton, "and I don't know where to reach him now by telegraph. We shall have to do the best we can with the case till he does come. Mr. Kellock, and you, Garry, and also you, Phil Harley, do all you can in the direction of bringing poor Bordwell's murderer to justice. The reward I have offered may bring us something."

"If I thought, gentlemen, that I could be of any service to you," here spoke up Willard Marblehead, "I would offer myself. I used to be something of a detective in my younger days."

"Then you are just the man we want," declared Sir Clyde. "Will you meet me at the bank immediately after dinner, sir? There is not a man in the place who has any detective skill whatever, so far as I know, and we are all at sea."

"Since you request it, I will meet you there," was the reply. "Please do me the favor to see that no papers or documents of any sort are disturbed till I can have an opportunity to look at them. It is just possible that I may be able to find something that will have bearing upon the affair, though it is now some time since I have done anything in the detective line."

CHAPTER IV.

POKER PHIL PERPLEXED.

In the mean time Simon Singletree had gone into the office to register for himself and Mrs. Grandis.

"I want two rooms, sir," he said to the clerk in his nervous way. "For myself I want something common and not expensive, but for Mrs. Grandis I want, and must have, the best the house affords. Do you understand me, sir? The very best."

"The very best is already taken, sir," announced the clerk, "but we have others that are good enough for the Queen of England or anybody else—even Mrs. Grandis. I will give the lady No. 9, sir, and you may have No. 49. That comes about as near to filling the bill as possible."

"But, sir, Mrs. Grandis will insist upon having the very best—"

"And she's got it, the very best we have vacant; we can't turn anybody out to gratify her, you know. Just register there, if you please."

There was no further argument, after that, so the little man took the pen and set forth his own name and that of the woman he served, placing her name first, of course.

"There they are, sir!" he said, as he laid down the pen. "Mrs. Grandis always insists upon having her name set down in full."

The clerk flirted the Register around facing him, and read:

"MRS. BRENTWOOD WITHERINGTON GRANDIS,
Galveston, Tex.

"SIMON SINGLETREE, Lawyer,
ditto."

"All right, Mr. Singletree!" said the clerk. "Shall I have you shown to your rooms now, sir?"

"One moment first, sir. Will you allow me to post this printed notice up here in your office where it will be seen?" and he drew a paper from his pocket as he spoke, and unfolding it, held it up for the clerk to read.

It was worded like this:

"PUBLIC NOTICE!"

"TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

"This is to set forth, declare, and proclaim, that my rascal of a husband, BRENTWOOD WITHERINGTON GRANDIS, has cruelly deserted me and left me alone to face the scorn of a cruel world. Whereas, I, his only true and lawful wife, do set for him and declare that he is my own personal and private property, and I hereby warn other women from having anything to do with him. I am bound to have him if I have to search the world over, for he is mine. The accompanying cut is a good likeness of him. Any one knowing anything about him will confer a favor by communicating the facts to me, his sorrowing wife.

"[Signed] ROBINNETTA LOVEPEACE GRANDIS.
SIMON SINGLETREE, Lawyer. [Attest.]"

In the center of the placard was the picture of a young man, not at all bad looking, and the printing was around it.

At sight of the likeness the clerk gave a slight

start, as though he recognized it, and as he read the wording a smile lit up his face, ending in a laugh when he had done.

Mr. Singletree never smiled.

"Why do you laugh, sir?" he soberly asked.

"It strikes me as rather funny, that is all, sir. Yes, post it up, of course, if you want to."

"It is no laughing matter, sir, I assure you," declared the lawyer. "At any rate it will be no laughing matter for the rascal when she gets hold of him. As for me, I am in it for five thousand dollars."

"The woman must be well fixed."

"So she is, sir. She is very rich, while that rascal of a husband is as poor as can be."

"Ha! then he robbed her before he skipped out, I take it, and that makes her anxious to get hold of him. No doubt she'll put him through when she does—"

"Not so, sir; not so, not so, not so," the lawyer interrupted. "He did not take a penny, sir; merely took his leave, that was all. It is a case of love, you see. She was a good while getting a man, and having got one she naturally wants to keep him."

"And you say you are in it for five thousand?"

"Yes. That is the sum I am to receive as soon as we find the man, and I compel him to return to his wife's bed and board, so to say."

"Well, I wish you good luck, for your own sake, Mr. Singletree, but for the sake of Grandis, judging by the little I saw and heard of his amiable better-half when she landed, I hope you won't find him."

"Don't say that—the latter, sir; don't say that! I have been a whole year at this business already, and it is eating into the profits like the mischief. I must find Grandis, sir, and when I do he's my mutton, and he'll be his wife's—well, hash is what she'll make of him, I think."

"Not if she loves him, surely."

"That's just it; she don't know how to love. She was so jealous of him that she made life a little hell for him, and that's why he got up and got, to put it in the vernacular."

"Simon Singletree!"

It was the voice of Robinnetta, and the lawyer jumped six inches clear from the floor.

"Y—y—yes," he responded; "coming now, just as soon as I put up the notice, Mrs. Grandis."

"It seems to me you are a good while about it, Simon Singletree. Post it at once and come here."

The little lawyer made haste to tack the placard up, and then made more haste to rejoin Mrs. Grandis.

As soon as he had gone out the clerk enjoyed a hearty laugh.

The office was a little place shut off from the bar-room so that ladies might visit it as well as men.

No one was there but the clerk, and when the lawyer had gone out he enjoyed a good laugh all to himself, fairly holding his sides, to be quiet about it.

"This is too good," he said to himself. "Who would have thought it! And it don't seem possible there can be any mistake about it, for the picture looks just like him, only a trifle careworn."

Stepping to the door he looked out, as if in quest of some one, and his face lighting up told that he had found the person he wanted.

"Hey, Poker Phil," he called; "step here a minute, will you?"

In a moment Phil Harley came in, a questioning expression on his face.

"Did you know that back-number female who came in on the stage with the little man?" the clerk asked.

"No, Jim," was the answer; "how should I know her?"

"She seems to know you!"

"Knows me?"

"Yes. Say, did you ever hear of Brentwood Grandis?"

"Never. Now, what are you driving at, anyhow? How do you know she seems to know me?"

"Look there and see for yourself."

The clerk pointed to the placard.

"Jews of Jericho!" ejaculated Poker Phil at sight of the face. "That's my phiz, as sure as smoke!"

"That's what I thought, Phil, and I'd half an idea you were the man; but now I can see you are not. But, read it and see what you think of it."

Poker Phil stepped forward and read the poster, and when he had done he gave vent to a prolonged whistle.

"That's a stunner," he declared. "Suppose

the old hawk sees me and swears I'm her lost man! It's a wonder she or the lawyer didn't see me on the piazza and go for me at once."

"There was too much of a crowd for that, I should say."

"Maybe that was it. But, Jim, what the deuce am I going to do if they fall on me as the missing piece of personal property?"

"Why, you'll have to prove that you are not, that's all."

"But, I have not lived here more than six months or so, and none of you know much about me before that time, while this man has been gone a year or longer, from what you tell me."

"Ha, ha, ha! It may make it a trifle unpleasant for you, that's the fact."

"I should say it might. What would you do about it if you were in my place? Shoot me if it don't take away my wind, almost."

"Why, I think I would take to the woods till she had gone on her way to some other camp. Still, the lawyer says she's rich, and if you want to admit the identity you might fall into a good thing—"

"What! with that hair!—that nose!—and that voice! Heaven forbid. Just give me leave to snatch that thing down from there, will you?"

"What good will that do you? The lawyer has a pocketful of them, and he'll only put up another."

"That's so; I guess there's no use kicking."

"Not a bit; there's only one of two things you can do."

"And what are they?"

"Take to the woods or face the music."

"I guess you are right, and I think I'll do the latter. I'm not their man, and I'll be hanged if I'll run away from any female that ever wagged her tongue."

Just then Old Avalanche stepped in.

"What would you do about it, old man?" asked Jim.

"I reckon I'd bring him hyer in a hurry if I had a rope to his neck," was the prompt response.

He was thinking of Deadwood Dick.

"No, no, not that," protested the clerk, "but this case of Poker Phil's here. See that notice there."

"Great currogated hambone what played the dickens with the digestive masheen of old Joner! What would I do, boyees? I'll tell ye that, in quick time. I'd git up and amble out o' hyer, Poker Phil, shake hands on't. Hyer's the relic of a oncet ragin' tornader o' destructive demolishun what has a feller feelin' ferye. I have been thar, boyee."

"I'm willin' to shake hands with you, old man, but in this case it's a mistake. I'm not the man that's wanted, you see. It's a mistake."

"Nevertheless, young man, I'd sneak out jest ther same—Great hambone, yes! If that woman gits her claws onto ye oncet, you ar' a goner, sure. I kin read that much in the tip of her nose. Her nose is somethin' like the one my Sal Samantha had, and I tell you when she got her grip onto anything it had to come—even to me—the oncet tremenjus north corner of the great triangle that was. Yes, git up and git, and so save yourself while you can. Don't let ner nab ye, great sarcumnavigatin' whirlwinds o' devastatin' demolishun, no!"

Poker Phil stoutly maintained that it was a mistake, in spite of the likeness; and so it was, as his manner had already clearly proved to Jim, the clerk. But what the outcome of it would be remained to be seen.

CHAPTER V.

DEADWOOD DICK'S TRIO.

"JOHNNY, what do you make of this?"

"That's just what I'm trying to do, Billy—make something out of it."

"And so am I. I tell you it has been a nasty piece of business, and if this town gets hold of the murderer he'll swing."

"You bet he will, and high, too. And he'd ought to swing. The man who could kill poor Bordwell could do any kind of a crime. But, he couldn't find a worse one to do."

"You are right. Too bad Deadwood Dick isn't here."

"I only wish he was, I'll bet he would make things hum till he had found the villain out."

The speakers were two young men, aged between twenty and twenty-one, who were standing in front of the closed bank where the crime had been committed.

They were not the only ones there, for the street was quite crowded yet, in spite of the fact that now a considerable time had elapsed since the discovery of the terrible deed.

About the same age, the young men had some-

thing of a similarity of appearance. They were strong-looking lads, having good features and well-rounded limbs, and the promise in them of one day becoming a pair of powerful men.

And who were they?

Their names are not unknown to the readers of these romances—in fact, have already been mentioned in a preceding chapter.

They were Billy Bucket and Johnny Smile, two of Deadwood Dick's allies, who had spent some time with him in active service on different occasions.

Both were good amateur detectives, and as they stood before the bank where the murder had been done, each was trying hard to get hold of some idea which would prove a clew in the search for the heartless assassin.

"It's a queer case, anyhow," Billy Bucket presently observed.

"You're right it is," asserted Johnny, "and queer in more ways than one, too. Do you think the rascal meant to kill the old man?"

"Mean to kill him? Why, he drove that thing, whatever it was, almost through his head. Of course he meant to kill him, or he wouldn't have struck more than a quarter as hard."

"Yes, I know; but do you think he went there with the intention of killing him?"

"Oh! I don't know about that. Mebbly not."

"I think not."

"What's your idea about it, then?"

"Why, I think he meant to give him a tap heavy enough to lay him out, but the man turned around and discovered him and that made it necessary for the robber to make it a killer."

"Shouldn't wonder if you are right. But, how did the fellow get in there without being seen? You know the whole office is shut off in front, by the partition, and that's got only one little door in it locked on the inside."

"That's what puzzles me."

They were silent and thoughtful again for some moments.

"Billy," spoke Johnny, next, "it strikes me that this wasn't a common piece of business."

"Even so," admitted Billy. "It has been hitting me that way right along. Any common fellow would have marched up to the front and demanded the ducats at the end of a gun."

"Yes; and a regular agent would have done the same thing, no doubt, only he would have had a pal to gather up the dudads while he held the cashier covered. That is the way we generally see it in the newspapers, you know."

"And when you see it in the newspapers it's so."

"Oh! sure."

"Then we agree that it wasn't a common rascal at all."

"Exactly, unless he was so very common that he didn't know how to go about the job."

"And we can't believe that, for a regular expert couldn't have done it neater, so far as getting off with the boodle is concerned. There's more to this thing than appears on top."

"You are right when you say that."

"Then let's sum up the points we understand and the points we don't understand."

"I'll tackle the ones we do understand, for that will be a good deal the easiest. In the first place, we know Bordwell was killed. That he was killed by a man whose object was the robbing of the safe. Then, it looks reasonable that the robber intended to knock him senseless, but being seen, made a whole job of it so that the cashier could never disclose his identity."

"That, is about all we know, and it's little enough. Not enough for us to go to work on, I'm afraid. Now, I'll tackle what we don't know, and I'll bet I'll run up the biggest score. First and most important, we don't know who the rascal was. Next, we don't know how he got in there without giving the cashier a chance to give the alarm. Then, how did he get out and away with his bundle of boodle without being seen? Again, where did he disappear to so mighty soon? They say the crime hadn't been done but a few minutes when the body was discovered. There's a good many other points I might bring up, but that's enough to puzzle over now."

About the time he finished speaking they were joined by Old Avalanche.

"Great old discombobberated hambone!" the old scout cried. "Why couldn't Deadwood Dicky 'a' come on that stage, when he's wanted so bad? It's enough ter make this ancient relic of a oncet terrible Injun epydemick set right up on his hind legs and howl a howl o' agonized lamentashun; et is, great hambone, yes!"

"It's too bad, old man," averred Billy Bucket.

"Great surgin' swoops o' rantankerous calamities, I should say et was! What kin we do

without him? Hyer has been done one of the most orful murders these hyer old ears—ears that oncet was—o' mine ever beard tell on, and not a man in the hull camp fit ter tackle the case and run the rascal down. Weepin' willers o' Babylon! et's 'most enough ter cause a flow o' tears that would deluge the kentry round about. Ever hear tell of the diffikilty I oncet got out of by lettin' go the floodgates of my tender and humble speeret?"

The boys never had.

"Waal, waal, I must tell ye 'bout that, sure. Ye see, et was up in the bad lands thar, when Prudence Cordeliar and Florence Night-in-a-gale wur in ther prime o' their existence. We got cornered on a sort o' knoll where there wasn't no show fur us a tall, and we was in a bad way. I was out o' 'munition for my gun, the lay of the land made it onpossible for Prudence Cordeliar to get in her fine work, and Florence Night-in-a-gale hadn't any show to do her part. All eround us was a gully, and the Injuns wur creepin' up to us on their bellies as thick as flies around the bung of a 'lasses cask. What ter do I didn't know, an' I got so worked up wi' rage and dis-p'intment that I cried—actooly cried."

He drew his sleeve across his eyes now at the recollection.

"Yes, actooly cried," he repeated. "The salt, sad tears flowed like a mighty river, while I sot thar waitin' to be slain. I wasn't payin' no 'tention to anything, but was just a-cryin' fer all I was worth, and the first thing that brought me to myself was a bl'at of delight from Florence Night-in-a-gale and a bray of joy from Prudence Cordeliar, follered immejustly by cries of despair from them Injuns. I jumped up an' looked, an' you may call me a heartless old lier if that gully wasn't nigh flooded, and the Injuns was a-strugglin' fer life in the flood! I guv a whoop and then I let off a few more weeps and filled the place right up full, when, mountin' Prudence Cordeliar, and leadin' Florence Night-in-a-gale by one horn, I swum out and left four hundred an' forty-nine Injuns, actooal count, strugglin' thar in the briny deep."

"Whew!" whistled Johnny Smile. "Why didn't you make it an even four-fifty, old man?"

"Great pertic'larized an' non-readjustable old hambone!" cried Avalanche. "Do you think, boyee, that I would tell a lie fer one poor, miserable, sneakin' Injun? I ruther reckon not!"

"Dropping Indians for the present, Avalanche," said Billy Bucket, "what do you think of this case?"

"What right have I got ter think about et at all?" demanded Avalanche.

"Why not?"

"Because Deadwood Dicky isn't around ter set my thinkin' on ther right trail, that is what and whyfor."

"That is just what's the matter, old man. Seeing that he isn't here, we are thinking about taking the matter up ourselves, to see what we can do with it; Johnny and I, and we'd like to have you go in with us."

"Wull, we might be able ter do as little at it as the next one—hambone, yes! but et bits me we ar' rather too late now to git ther inside track, me boyees. I was lookin' ye up to tell ye that thar's another man in ther field now, and he's goin' to tackle it purty soon."

"Who is that?" asked the boys both together.

"He's a feller at the Grand Pacific, a man named Willard Marblehead who is from Washin'ton. He's a man o' ripe age, not yet on the wither, and seems ter be a smart man and mebbly does know somethin' about detective work; but, Lordy! I'll bet he can't hold a candle to Deadwood Dicky, nohow!"

"Does he claim to be a detective?" asked Johnny.

"I believe he says he uster be somethin' of that sort when he was a young feller."

"Well, it's to be hoped he is one, and that he will be able to yank this mean sneak that killed poor Bordwell. There'll be a third-rate hanging if he does, you bet on that."

"Attenuated and pre-historic old ossified hambone, yes! We'll see what he will do, for he is comin' here with his boss purty soon to take a look over the ground, and we'll be able to tell by his doin's whether he's a reg'lar or not. I hope he is, fer we mustn't let this camp be disgraced—hambone, no!"

"If that is the case, that somebody is going to take hold of it in the regular way, s'pose we hang back a little and see what comes of it," proposed Billy.

"That's about the proper thing, I should say," agreed Johnny.

"Pernambulatin' old hambone, yes!" cried Avalanche. "Of course it is. Oncet ther game is up an' runnin', then I'm a p'izen rantankerous

old whirlwind o' demolishun on the trail, an' ef we don't make ther dust fly you kin take out my backbone an' make a mule-trace of et; you kin, by mighty!"

They went off, then, in quest of dinner, talking the case over and looking at it from every imaginable point of view.

CHAPTER VI.

MARBLEHEAD TAKES HOLD.

IT was along early in the afternoon when Mayor Carleton, Dunbar Kellock, Joe Garry, Phil Harley and a few others accompanied Willard Marblehead to the bank where the dastardly deed had been done, where the gentleman from Washington was to try his hand at tearing away the veil that shrouded the matter in mystery.

The crowd was still in front of the building, not so great as it had been during the first half hour after the discovery, of course, but still of good size, and near the steps were Old Avalanche, Billy Bucket and Johnny Smile.

When those whose names have been mentioned came up, Johnny Smile stepped out and accosted Carleton.

"Mr. Carleton," said he, "will you allow us to go inside with you?"

"What for, Johnny?" asked Sir Clyde.

"Because we are interested in the case, seeing that it concerns Deadwood Dick, and want to do what we can to help find the murderer."

"Great hambone, yes!" cried Old Avalanche. "We ar' Dicky's old-time rocks, we ar', and we want to be in et ef we can, you bet! Lor' Jerusha, yes! I feel as ef my age gives me some claim to rights."

"What do you say to this, Mr. Marblehead?" asked the manager. "These are Deadwood Dick's allies, and have been trusted by him in many important matters. Have you any objection to their going in with us, to look about and pick up what they can?"

"Why, certainly not," was the response. "Let them come in, by all means. It is possible, having seen service under Deadwood Dick, that they will be as likely to discover something as I."

Dick's disguise was good and his acting perfect, and he passed this ordeal without a suspicion as to his identity.

"Very well," assented Sir Clyde; "come in with us, then, but remember that Mr. Marblehead must be given first privilege in everything, since he has so kindly offered his services."

"That is understood, sir," agreed Billy Bucket. "All we want to do is to see and hear, so as to make up our minds concerning some things we have been tryin' to figure out."

"All right; come along!"

They entered the bank building and the doors were closed after them.

When it was rumored outside that the stranger with the mayor was a detective, the crowd took fresh interest and began to increase at once.

When the doors had been closed, Mr. Marblehead remarked:

"Now, Mr. Kellock, as you were the one who discovered the crime let me hear your description of the matter as it became revealed to you."

"Very simple," said Mr. Kellock, affably. "I entered the door here and stepped to the window there," indicating. "I could not see Mr. Bordwell, and after waiting a moment, called him, thinking he had stepped into the rear part of the office. As he did not respond, I stepped to the end there and craned my neck to look behind the partition. It was then that I was horrified to find him lying on the floor with a terrible wound upon his head."

"What did you do then?" asked Deadwood Dick.

"Why, I sprung to the door immediately and gave the alarm, making known what I had discovered, and in a few minutes there was a surging crowd before the building, as everybody knows."

"And there was no clew of any sort to be discovered, eh?"

"None, so far as I was able to find."

"No weapon—no papers lying around—nothing lost near the safe?"

"Nothing whatever that I could attach the least importance to, sir. Nothing at all that was even a hint at a clew. But, then, I am no detective, and you may find something that would easily escape me."

"I am afraid not, since so many persons have been in here since the discovery was made. However, let us see," and Mr. Marblehead made a careful inspection of the interior.

He found nothing.

"You are right," he admitted; "there is no clew. We often read about finding a lost button, or a bit of cloth, or a track in the dust, or something of that sort, but we don't find either here. This is a case without the accompanying clew for the detective to work upon."

"And then you have to give it up, like the rest of us?" asked Sir Clyde, in anxious tone.

"Not by any means, sir. If the clew does not lie open in sight, we must try to unearth one. It will probably be found in some form or other. I presume you are somewhat familiar with the working of the office business, are you not, Mr. Carleton?"

"Yes, I know something about it, sir."

"We will see if we can discover what was the last business the murdered man performed."

"I do not know that it will be easy to do that, further than to note what checks he may have cashed last. The order on the file will show that."

"It may amount to nothing, but we will look at the checks."

"Very well, sir."

"What'd'ye think of him, Billy?" asked Johnny Smile, giving Bucket a nudge and putting the question in whisper.

"He seems to know what he's about, anyhow," responded Billy Bucket. "We'll see how this check search pans out, now, and maybe it will show up something."

The mayor had stepped to the cashier's window, where stood a file with many checks upon it, and taking off the top one he looked at it a moment and then read it off out aloud.

"Payable to the order of Hen Toole, one hundred and two dollars. This is signed by Robert Keeter, and it was no doubt the very last check poor Bordwell ever received at the window, and it is possible that this man Toole was the last man with whom he did business."

"Perhaps; but we cannot be sure of that. Who is this Hen Toole?"

"He is a fellow of very little account; drinks, gambles, and works a little when he is forced to it by necessity."

"And who is Robert Keeter?"

"He is proprietor of the place next door here, the Monte Carlo it is called: a gambling place. He is a rough man, and is commonly called Rough Rob. He keeps an orderly place."

"How do you suppose he came to owe Hen Toole a hundred and two dollars?"

"Probably the fellow won it at the gaming-table."

"That would indicate that Toole had some skill or that the other man had a remarkable run of bad luck, eh?"

"Yes; and it must have been the latter, for I never heard of Toole's having any skill at the tables."

"Well, what is the next check?"

Mr. Carleton took up another and read it off as before.

"It is to the order of one Ben Fry," he announced, "and calls for seventy-one dollars. This, too, is one of Keeter's checks."

"That so? And what sort of man is Mr. Fry?"

"He will pair well with Toole."

"Um! Well, what's the next on file?"

"Ha! another of the same sort. Payable to Gil Brett, two hundred and seven dollars. It is signed by the same person, too. Still, this may not indicate anything. I cannot believe these men did the deed."

"Oh! certainly not. I would not have any one think I mean to accuse them of it," assured Mr. Marblehead. "But, they may be able to tell us of some person who was in the bank at the time they had their checks cashed, or whom they met upon leaving."

"Hambone what tickled ther gullick of old Joner!" exclaimed Old Avalanche, who had not spoken to this time, "et hits me hard that you are on the right track, old man. Ef Deadwood Dicky was byer I think he'd 'gree with ye, too. That sort o' sounds like him."

"I am glad to have your approval, old friend," was the response, as Mr. Marblehead looked at him over his gold-bowed "nose-pinchers." "Still, there may not be anything in this discovery of mine—pshaw! it is no discovery; it is only what any one would have looked into."

"It did not occur to one of us," declared Sir Clyde.

"That does not signify; you had not put your mind to it yet."

"If you don't care," spoke up Billy Bucket, "I am my pardner here will go and see if we can locate these three fellows for you."

"That's a good idea," agreed Mr. Marblehead. "Go, by all means. Just a moment, first, however, while I ask a question or two. Mr. Carle-

ton, I take it that this man Keeter deposits his money here subject to check."

"He does; in fact, most of the business men of the Pocket do that. You see, this bank has the only burglar-proof safe in the city."

"And it has been usual for him to pay out his losses at the table by checks, I suppose."

"Yes, it is quite regular. Every morning as soon as the bank was opened the winners of the night's game were at the door to present their checks to get the cash. It is all regular."

"That is all, then. Go ahead, young gentlemen, and when you find the men just ask them to step up to the Monte Carlo for a few minutes. Do not let them know what is wanted; simply say Rough Rob wants to see them a moment. I have no doubt they will come."

"They will come fast enough," asserted Johnny Smile.

"Ef they don't, by the great rampagin' old relics o' hambone what made a tin whistle fer Joner ef this hyer old fossil don't make 'em, and you hear the rumble o' my voice on that subject," cried Old Avalanche. "Go ahead, me lads, and I'll bring up the rear to see that nothin' happens to ye when ye ain't lookin'. I'm inter this thing now, I am; great hambone, yes!"

The three went out and away.

There was then some further search in the office, followed by a brief consultation, and they adjourned to the gaming palace next door.

Drawn by the crowd, there was a good assembly there, but the proprietor himself, Rough Rob, was not to be seen. That, however, was all right, for he usually slept after dinner.

"Where is Mr. Keeter?" inquired Sir Clyde.

"Asleep," answered the head man of the place at the time.

"Well, call him, if you please; tell him I want to see him on business."

The word was passed, and some one went to bring the proprietor, who presently appeared, with his hair all mussed up and his eyes looking very sleepy.

"What's the matter, mayor?" he asked. "Have you found out anything further about the murder matter? I intend going into it to win, as soon as I have my bracer of sleep. But I'm preventing you from stating your business. Go ahead."

CHAPTER VII.

ARE THESE MEN INNOCENT?

ROUGH ROB was a rough-looking man indeed. He was above the average in size, and looked to be a powerful fellow. He had a dark face, and it had an habitual scowl that was not pleasant to see.

Since he had come to Pistol Pocket he had run his place in strict accordance with the conditions upon which he had been allowed to open it, and that was, that it was to be an orderly place.

More than once he had found occasion to "bounce" a "bad man" who had sought to kick up a disturbance in the Monte Carlo, and in each instance he had done the business up so effectually that the same man had never sought a repetition of the dose. Rough Rob had come to be feared.

The habitual scowl was upon his face as he addressed the mayor now, but he spoke in as agreeable manner as he could assume.

"We have called to see what you can tell us about three men who played cards here last night," said the mayor.

"All right; anything I can tell you I'll do it with pleasure. Who were the men?"

"They are Gil Brett, Ben Fry, and Hen Toole."

"Oh! those fellows. They didn't play last night, but this forenoon, and the rascals waxed me bad, too."

"So it seems. We find their checks were the last ones cashed at the bank, and we have thought it possible that they may be able to throw some light upon the matter."

"Ha! you don't think they did the deed, do you?"

"Oh, no, we are not accusing them; in fact I don't believe they did it; but they may have seen some one there upon whom we can place suspicion."

"That's true; and, come to think of it now, they had not been gone from here so very long when the crime was discovered. You see, I played with them because I was in the mood, and being sleepy and careless I allowed them to win quite a pile before I took any particular interest as to how the game was going. But, what did you want to ask about them?"

"Well, in what frame of mind they were when they left here; whether they had any private talk that can be set down as looking sus-

picious now in the face of what has been discovered; whether they had any companions here who are strangers, or who looked as if they were a degree or two worse than the fellows themselves. Anything, in fact, that may serve to throw some light upon this matter, or that may point suspicion toward these men."

"Can't say that I saw anything at all, sir," was the answer to that. "They were the same as usual, the little attention I paid to them, except that they went off in high feather over the way in which they had waxed me at my own game. That was the last I saw of them, and they were out of my mind as soon as they had gone out the door with their checks. I went to bed, and knew nothing more till the noise of the crowd woke me up, and then I was too sleepy to stay up to take interest in this crime at the time, when I had learned what was wrong, but I meant to do so as soon as I got up this afternoon."

"Then it looks as though no suspicion can attach to these three fellows, as I thought. However, I have sent for them to come here, in your name, thinking that would bring them quicker than if they were told I wanted to see them. I suppose that is all right."

"Yes, of course; and, now that I am up and wide awake, I'll stay up. I'll go and finish dressing and slick up a little, and if they come before I appear let 'em wait for me, and while they wait you can be sizing them up. Take seats, gentlemen, and be at home."

"That is not a bad idea," said Marblehead. "We'll do that."

"Mr. Keeter," said Sir Clyde, Mr. Marblehead having spoken, "let me introduce Mr. Willard Marblehead, of Washington, who has offered his services in looking into this case. He used to be a detective in his younger days."

The proprietor of the Monte Carlo eyed Dick narrowly as he offered his hand to him.

"I'm glad to know you, sir," he said. "I hope you'll have success in hunting down the rascal who did it for poor Bordwell in so mean a fashion."

"And I hope so, too," responded Dick. "But, I am out of practice—perhaps never was of much account at my best, so I may have to give up baffled. I shall do the best I can, however."

Keeter went out and the others took seats to await the coming of the trio whom the boys had gone out to find.

In the mean time Billy and Johnny had had but little trouble in finding their game. Johnny knew the haunts of such fellows pretty well, and after visiting one or two resorts they came upon them, when they made known their errand.

The men were a little suspicious at first, and rather inclined not to bite at the bait, demanding to know what was wanted of them and all about it, but the boys said they might go or not, as they pleased, and left them.

This gave the fellows more spirit to go, since it appeared that Rough Rob had merely sent word by these lads that he wanted to see them at the saloon.

Billy and Johnny, on leaving them, had gone right on down the valley to the next corner, and the fellows looking after them believed they had simply dropped in to leave the word as they went along on their way somewhere else.

"We'll go up an' see what he wants, anyhow," decided Gil Brett, the leading spirit of the three. "We have got the money on the checks, and he can't corner us fer that, that's sure. Come on, pards, an' we'll soon find out what's in the wind. Guess et won't mount ter much."

"Et can't be possible that they think we done that thing at the bank, kin et?" questioned Hen Toole.

"Hope not, anyhow," said Ben Fry.

"Et ain't likely, an' yet et may be," observed Brett. "We was in there not a very long time fore et happened, ye know. Ef that's et, we don't want ter hang back any, fer that would look bad fer us. We don't want ter be 'cused o' that."

"Not any. But, we know we didn't do et, so we have nothin' ter be feared of in goin' to see what's wanted."

So talking, they made their way to the Monte Carlo.

When they entered they looked around a little uneasily, in spite of their declaration of their innocence, and seeing the mayor there did not tend to make their uneasiness any the less.

"Whar is Rough Rob?" asked Brett, addressing the man in charge.

"He'll be in in a few minutes," was the answer.

"Does he want to see us?"

"Guess he does; did somebody tell you so?"

"Know what he wants?"

"No; you'll have to wait and see him to find out."

"All right; we'll wait. Jest trot out some-thing for us to grin over while we wait."

They took seats at a table, and something to drink was provided. They at once filled their glasses, and as they sat and drank they talked in low tones among themselves.

Presently Billy Bucket and Johnny Smile came in.

At sight of them the three fellows looked up in something of half alarm, and eyed the others in the room suspiciously.

All this time the eyes of the Prince of Pistol Pocket were upon them, studying them well. Nothing in his face indicated what his thoughts were regarding them, however.

The others simply waited.

In a little while Rough Rob came in again, and without noticing any one else he stepped forward to the table where the three men were sitting.

"Did the boys tell you I wanted you?" he asked.

"Yes," responded Gil. "What d'ye want?"

"Who was in the bank when you got your checks cashed?"

"Durn ef I know," was the response. "Don't think anybody was there."

All three of the fellows had turned slightly pale at the questions, for it brought them upon dangerous ground.

"You are all of the same mind, that there was no one present when you presented your checks?" the proprietor of the place pushed.

Each of the men declared, then, that to the best of his recollection no one else had been present.

Deadwood Dick, who was observing closely, nodded his head as if he had proof now that some thought of his in some direction had been well grounded.

"If that is the case, then," Rough Rob said bluntly, "the mayor here wants to see you. There is ground for suspecting that maybe you three are the fellows who robbed the safe and killed Bordwell."

Upon this charge the three men sprung to their feet, their faces blanched, and looked helplessly upon their accuser.

"We didn't do it, I sw'ar we didn't do it!" cried Gil Brett in alarm.

Rough Rob waved his hand as if to say that he had nothing further to do with the affair, but referred him to the mayor.

"I do not accuse you yet, boys," Sir Clyde spoke up. "I want to question you concerning your visit to the bank just before the deed was done. I want to know whom you saw there."

"Nobody but the cashier," the fellow still maintained.

Again Dick nodded his head slightly, as if in approval.

"You are sure about that?"

"Yes, now that I have thought it over I am sure of it. Thar wasn't nobody thar but us. We was jokin' among ourselves how we had got ahead of Rough Rob fer oncet, an' sayin' what a red-hot time we'd have in honor of et."

"All of you are sure on that point?"

They were, to a man.

"Well, then, did you meet any one coming in as you went out?"

They were excited, as they naturally would be, but after some thought they answered that they had seen no one.

"And you left the cashier alive and well?"

"Ter be sure we did! You ar' barkin' up ther wrong tree hyer, sure."

It was now that Deadwood Dick rose from his place and stepped forward and faced the fellows.

"I have been employed upon this case as a detective, my men," he said, "and I want a word with you in strict privacy. Look me in the eyes."

The fellows did so, but now they were considerably agitated and not a little nervous. Still, they met his gaze unflinchingly, and he was evidently satisfied, one way or another.

"You are innocent?" he asked, solemnly.

"We ar', boss; we swear we are."

"Very well. Mr. Keeter, is there a room here into which I may retire with these men for a few moments? I have some private questions to put to them."

CHAPTER VIII.

ACCUSED AND ACQUITTED.

THERE was a small room near at hand, and the proprietor of the Monte Carlo made haste to place it at the disposal of Mr. Marblehead for the purpose that had been named, and into it the detective and the prisoners retired.

This was a small room intended for business or

for private gaming purposes, and it was fitted out with tables, chairs, etc.

"Now," said Dick, when he had closed and secured the door, "sit down, all of you, and we'll talk this thing over in private. I'll begin by telling you that I am satisfied you are innocent of the crime."

Each man of them drew a long breath of relief at that.

"I'm glad ter hear ye say et," declared Gil Brett, "fer I sw'ar again that et's the truth and nothin' but the truth. We didn't do et, and we don't know who did. We didn't have nothin' at all ter do with et no way. We never thought o' robbin' ther bank."

"I believe you. Now, let's have a talk about it, for I believe you can help me a good deal in this matter, if you are willing to work with me. Was the dead man a friend of yours—or a friend to any one of you?"

"Et's sartain that he wasn't our enemy," declared Gil. "We wouldn't 'a' done him no harm nohow."

"Then you are anxious to see the right man punished for the crime?"

"You bet! And the more so, seein' that et is hinted that we done et, which I sw'ar again we didn't."

"You three went into the bank together, I believe?"

"Yes, all at oncet."

"And you were paid one after the other?"

"Jest so."

"Are you willing to let me see the money that was paid to you—that is, all you have left of it?"

"Why, sartain! Et's ours, though, and ye don't want ter try ter take et away from us or there may be trouble."

"Have no fears; I do not intend trying anything of the kind, my friends. I want to see the money to know what kind of bills the bank was paying out at the time of the crime."

The men took the money from their pockets without another word and laid it out before the detective in three little heaps.

"How much is there in each heap?" Dick asked.

Each man named his sum.

"I want to buy it of you. Will you sell out?"

"Why, cert, ef you'll pay dollar fer dollar in good stuff," declared Gil.

"I'll do that same and more. I'll give you an even ten where the odd dollars come in at the end."

"We'll do et, pard."

The dicker was soon carried out, and Deadwood Dick pocketed the money that had been the last paid out of the bank before the crime took place.

"Now, men," said he, "see here. I want this little transaction of ours kept a secret. You declare your innocence, and I have told you that I believe you are innocent; but, that is not proving it."

Their faces fell considerably.

"Hear me out," added Dick, playing his role to perfection. "If I go out and tell them I believe you are innocent, they will demand to know why I think so, and I am not prepared to have that made known yet. I must give them the case as it looks from the outside, and you men must prove your innocence. If you are innocent, of course it won't be hard to do that."

It was plain the fellows did not relish that plan.

"Can't et be done some other way?" questioned Gil.

"No; no other way at all. This way or none, and you must help me to carry out the plan."

"Well, let's hear what yer plan is, in full."

"I'll tell them I can't prove you guilty or innocent, and that will be no story, for while I believe you are innocent, I have no proof of it, you see. They will propose holding you for trial, and I'll say it will be the best thing to do until I can look further into the affair."

"An' s'pose they take et into their heads to lynch us."

"No fear of that, for I guess the law has the upper hand in this place."

"An' et's jest that that's to be feared, when the people git up and go ter playin' Jedge Lynch."

"They won't try it here. But, that is the the only thing there is for you to do, for that is the way I am going to manage it, and I don't see how you can help yourselves."

"We mought try et this way—"

Gil made a move as he spoke to draw a weapon, to show what he meant, but he was covered before he could draw.

"And I would balk you just this way," re-

turned Dick, coolly. "There is no need for us to play at that game, for I can match you at it every time. You may as well make up your mind to do what I want you to do."

"Pard, I guess you are right."

That little bit of experience was enough, and now Dick had the men just where he could handle them to suit himself.

"Now hear what I have to say," he went on. "I'm going to try to prove you innocent, or rather help you to do it, but at the same time I want it to appear that I am rather inclined to think you guilty. Do you understand?"

"I guess we do."

"All right. If you can show that you are innocent, you will be allowed to go at once; if not, you will be held. I hope you will be held for a day or two, for it will help my plans best; but if not, all the same."

"We ruther hope et will be not."

"I suppose so. Mind, now, not a word of what has passed between us, and be particular not to mention this exchange of money that has been made."

"All right, pard; you hold the best hand and we ain't kickin' hard."

That being all, and Dick having gained his point, he opened the door and allowed the men to pass out, he following them.

"Well, Mr. Marblehead, what is the word?" asked Mr. Kellock.

"The word is, sir, that I cannot prove them either innocent or guilty," was the answer.

"In that case they must be held on suspicion," decided the mayor.

"By all means," echoed Dick. "We will hold them, but will give them every chance to prove themselves innocent of the charge if they can do so."

"Whatever you say do shall be done," averred Sir Clyde. "You have done good work on the case already, finding this clew where none of us thought of looking and so getting a start."

"That was nothing," Dick waived. "Now, prisoners, have you thought of anything that will speak in your favor?"

"We can't think of any proof, I'm afraid," answered Brett. "We met folks on the street after we'd left the bank, but never thinkin' of anything of this kind we didn't pay no'tention to who they was."

"And we must not forget," reminded the detective, "that there is no proof against them. All we have to hold them on is the fact that they were the last persons known to have been in the bank before the crime. We must try to find some one who saw the cashier alive *after* they had been there."

When first arrested, these men had been slightly drunk, but now they were as sober as judges, the scare having banished every trace of intoxication.

"Then it is for me to commit them to jail for the present," said the mayor. "I do not believe they are guilty, myself, but that has nothing to do with the case. I must do my duty."

By this time the saloon was packed with men, and it was no trouble to find plenty who were willing to disarm and bind the fellows' hands.

"They have money on them, of course," reminded Dick. "We must not forget it is theirs, and if it is lost of course somebody will be responsible for it. Perhaps you had better take charge of it for them, Mayor Carleton."

"Yes, perhaps I had. Are you willing I should do that, boys?"

"Ter be sure," was the response. "We know you, mayor, and we knows you'll do us fair."

"I assure you on that point."

So, the mayor took charge of all the valuables the men had upon them, and they were led away to the lock-up under strong guard.

Needless to say the excitement was great, now that arrests had been made, and there were some hotheads who wanted the excitement carried to the point of a lynching.

There was little danger of that, however, and when the mayor, in a public speech, explained that there was scarcely any evidence against the three men, further than just enough to hold them on suspicion, the hotheads were hissed down in short order.

When the prisoners had been taken away, and after the mayor had made his address to the crowd, those in whom we are immediately concerned made their way back to the hotel, where Dick sought his rooms and the company of his wife, to whom he told all about the affair and what his suspicions were concerning it all. And Kate agreed with him.

It was a little later in the day when a man came to the hotel in haste to see the mayor.

Sir Clyde was not there at the time, but was sent for, and the man made known his business

He was no stranger, but one of the solid business-men of the young city.

His name was Orton Byland, and his word was his bond.

"I hear you have arrested three fellows for this murder, Carleton?" he greeted, as soon as the mayor made his appearance. "They are innocent, and I happen to be able to prove it for them."

"That so? Well, that was my own impression, but I could not do anything but hold them, you see. Wait till I send for Marblehead, and I'll let him hear your story at the same time you tell it to me. He is a detective, and I have given him the case."

Accordingly Dick was called down, and the man told what he knew.

He had had an errand in the upper part of the Pocket that morning, and was passing the bank, on the opposite side of the street, when he saw Toole, Brett and Fry coming out. He had thought nothing of it, of course, and while he still looked he had seen Mr. Bordwell at his window, and the two had exchanged greetings by a wave of the hand.

The word of such a man as Byland was not to be doubted, and it was taken as proof sufficient that the three men were innocent of all knowledge of the crime, so they were allowed to go and their money and other effects were restored to them. They had been used, however, to the extent Deadwood Dick had desired.

CHAPTER IX.

THREATENED AND DEFIED.

It has been shown that Pistol Pocket had two stages daily, and when it was time for the second stage to arrive in the evening those who were anxious for the coming of Deadwood Dick were again on hand to meet him.

These were, of course, Sir Clyde Carleton, Billy Bucket, Johnny Smile, and Old Avalanche, first; and after them Joe Garry, Dunbar Kellock, Poker Phil and the others interested. They were a good crowd, all told, and they occupied a prominent place on the hotel piazza when the stage drew up.

The passengers alighted, but no Deadwood Dick was numbered among them.

Nor was it considered possible that any of those who came could be the Prince of the West in disguise; hence there was much disappointment all around, for, according to the word Sir Clyde had had from him he was to be looked for on this day. They could not understand why he had not come.

It had been the intention of the people of the Pocket to get up something of a demonstration in honor of his arrival, but after the crime at the bank the mayor had given orders that that idea was to be abandoned altogether, since respect must be shown for the dead.

The town, therefore, was quiet and sober, yet full of expectancy until after the passengers had been seen and it was found that Richard had not come.

"Great cantankarams o' proverbadenshul hambone!" cried Old Avalanche, "but et is 'most enou' h ter make a feller rise up an' smote his grand-dad one across ther ear, dog my cats ef et ain't. Whar is my Pard Dicky, anyhow?"

"Any one of a hundred things may have happened to delay him," remarked Mr. Marblehead.

"I allow you ar' right," admitted the old scout, "but et's tough ter want him so bad and not see him a-comin'."

"You are not satisfied with the way the case is progressing, it is plain to see that," Marblehead observed. "I admit that it is moving rather slowly."

"Lor' Jerushal don't think I meant ter 'sult ye, mister; great hambone, no! You ar' doin' all ye kin, same as the rest of us, but we ain't none of us Deadwood Dicks."

"I know how it is, old friend, and I am as much disappointed as any of you. However, since he has not come, and we are left to rely upon ourselves, we must make a determined effort to do something. Mr. Carleton, if I appear inactive, do not think I am not working."

"Your first move in the matter has inspired me with confidence in you, sir," Sir Clyde responded. "Work in your own time and way, sir."

"Great old double-j'inted hambone, yes!" cried Avalanche. "Ef I said anything ter hurt yer feelin's, don't let et stick thar, fer et wasn't meant, nohow. We trust ye, Mister Marble-top."

The man smiled at the blunder in his name.

There was further talk among them, when they made supper their next business of the hour.

It was after supper, when it was growing dark and the lamps in the Pocket were being lighted, that Billy Bucket and Johnny Smile walked up the street to the scene of the crime.

"Do you think Marblehead is any good at all?" Johnny was asking.

"I wouldn't, if it hadn't been for the way he got onto the three men so quick as he did."

"Deadwood Dick would have thought of that right away."

"So did this man."

"That's so, and so there is some reason to have faith in him; but, what is he doing?"

"Give it up. If he is doing anything it is on the quiet. I'll tell you I'd like to know what he said to those fellows when he had them alone."

"So would I. I'll bet that had something to do with whatever plans he must have in his mind. If we only knew him a little better it wouldn't do any harm to ask him and see if we couldn't help."

"It wouldn't do, for he'd think us trying to push in on his ground. He isn't Dick, you know."

And so they talked on till they came to the bank, where they came upon Mr. Marblehead hims'lf, standing and looking at the building.

"Good-evening, boys," he greeted. "Here is a discovery."

"What's that?" asked Billy and Johnny together.

"Look there on the bank door."

The boys looked, and there beside the notice the mayor had put up was another.

It was plenty light enough to see the paper, but too dark to see what was on it without stepping quite close, and that they did at once.

To their surprise they read this:

"Slayer of Joel Bordwell, tremble!"

"DEADWOOD DICK, JR."

"Jippity cripps!" exclaimed Billy. "The boss is in town, after all! Now I bet we will see some fun before many moons!"

"Bet yer life on't," echoed Johnny. "That's the boss's own signature, sure, and you can bet the tiger will roar when he begin to twist his tail, Mr. Marblehead you don't know what a terror the boss is."

"I suppose not, according to your estimate of him. Perhaps he will want to have me drop the matter now and keep out."

"If he does he will tell you so, you can be sure of that. If he is here, and he is, he knows everything that's going on, and if he don't want you you will hear from him to that 'fect."

"Well, I'm glad of that. I'll keep on with my own plans, then, until I am stopped."

"Yes, that's what I'd do."

"And what are you boys doing?"

"A good deal of nothing," answered Johnny.

"Can't find anything to do," declared Billy, frankly.

"Perhaps if you look up your boss he will give you something."

"Smokin' Injun! you *don't* know him, not even a little bit. If he don't want us to know who he is, there is no use tryin' to find him out."

"Not a bit o' use," averred Johnny. "Might tumble over him and never know it. Can't tell whether he's man or woman, black or white, or what he is. You wait till he shows up, and see if I haven't spoke gospel."

"You seem to have unbounded faith in him. Well, since you have no hope of discovering him, how would you like to assist me?"

"We'll do anything that promises to show up the murderer."

"I won't promise what will come of it, but there are two men in this place whom it will be well to watch."

"And who are they?"

"Mr. Kellock and the man they call Poker Phil."

"Phew!" whistled Billy. "What had *they* to do with it, Mr. Marblehead?"

"Perhaps they had nothing to do with it, but I have an idea it will be well to watch them a little. I think you boys can do that."

"We'll try and hitch at it, anyhow, if you say so."

"I do say so. But, you want to do it in such a way that their suspicion will not be aroused."

"We'll try to do that, too. You don't mind if we let Old Avalanche into it, do you? The old hambone is in a fever to see something done."

"Not the least objections to that, but you must caution the old fellow not to let his enthusiasm run away with him and so spoil your chances of doing good work. I guess he is to be trusted, however."

With that the man turned away and went off.

toward the hotel, leaving the two boys to think over what he had revealed to them, meager as it was.

"What do you think now?" asked Johnny. "His stock is on the rise," was the answer. "Wonder what he has got against Kellock and the sport?"

"Guess we'll have to wait and see, for he didn't seem inclined to tell, unless he spoke the truth when he said he wasn't sure they had anything to do with it, or words to the same effect."

"They went off in quest of Old Avalanche, then, before beginning their work of shadowing Kellock and the sport."

The old scout was soon found, and when they made known to him what they had learned, that Deadwood Dick was in the Pocket, the old fellow nearly went wild.

"Great old hambone what tickled ther gullick of Joner and told ther fortune of ther beathens!" he cried in a subdued manner so that he might not be overheard. "Is et possible that my Dicky is right hyer in the camp?"

"He certainly is," they assured him.

"And you swear et is his own persoual and identical hand-write that's on the door, do ye? Hambone o' wonders! What d'ye s'pose he is? Kin et be possible, after all, that he is that little monkey of a lawyer, Simon Singletree? And kin ther bonny Kate be that sharp-nosed woman with ther sawmill voice—Lor' Jerusha, et don't seem et kin be possible."

"Nor is it possible," declared the boys in one voice.

"Not unless Dick has changed mightily since we saw him last, and also his wife. No, old man, they are not in it this time."

"Then who in ther name o' great rampagin' and tremejus signs o' destructin' demolishun is he? Answer me that, 'fore I go cl'ar off me feed an' have a rantankerous fit o' connipshun."

"We give it up, Avalanche. But, if you want to see that notice on the door, let's walk around that way."

"An' I do—hambone, yes."

The trio wended their way to the bank, and as they approached they saw there was quite a crowd in the street before the building.

"They have found it out," observed Billy.

"And I'll bet they are wonderin' who he is and whar he's hidin'," declared the old scout.

When they came up, however, and mingled with the crowd, they found there was further cause for excitement than the notice of Deadwood Dick.

Upon the door was a third placard, and men were gathered before it trying to make it out in the dim light. That it was something of an exciting nature was clear enough.

Presently one man advanced with a lantern, and at once was plain to be read by all. It was in these words:

"TO DEADWOOD DICK—DEFIANCE!"

"You are not man enough for this case! When this meets your eye the robber with the boodle will be out of the city and away. He defies you!"

"THE SLAYER."

There it was, in bold letters, and no wonder it raised excitement in the camp. Deadwood Dick had threatened; Deadwood Dick was defied.

CHAPTER X.

ROBINNETTA FINDS HER MAN.

PHIL HARLEY was by this time in torment. Everybody had seen or heard of the placard at the hotel, and everybody had some joke to get off at his expense concerning the woman of the red hair and sharp nose.

And those who really believed he was the man Grandis were in the majority, too, so true to life was the likeness on the poster. The only difference was that the sport looked more fresh and blooming than the likeness, but that was easy to account for.

It would make any man look "off his feed," it was argued, to have to live with a woman like that, and it was only natural that the sport had picked up since he had taken himself off. But the sport insisted that he was not the man, and took it all in good part at first, but at length it began to get tiresome and he showed some temper over it.

And it was noticed, too, that he kept out of the way of the woman with the enumerated charms.

This argued against him, and in spite of his protestations the majority, as said, came to believe that he was indeed the truant husband.

The sport explained it that he had no desire to figure in a scene, and if he could avoid it by keeping out of the woman's way it was to his interest to do so. He cared not what people thought about it.

In order to keep out of sight, he went early in the evening to the Monte Carlo with the intention of remaining there all the evening.

He had not been there long when Billy Bucket entered and looked around the place.

"You haven't seen that pard of mine, have you?" he asked.

"You mean Johnny Smile?" asked the man in charge.

"You bet."

"No; he hasn't been here. I don't know where he is. Haven't seen him this evenin'."

"Guess I'll stop here and wait for him, then. Maybe he will turn up in a little while, like the bad penny we read about."

With that excuse for his presence, Billy took a seat only a little distance from where Poker Phil sat.

The hall was well filled, and he drew but little attention to himself as he took his seat, and even less afterward, for he remained quiet to observe and listen.

The conversation was mainly about the crime recently perpetrated, and about the mysterious coming of Deadwood Dick, who was spoken of as the Prince of Pistol Pocket. Where he could be, or in what disguise, puzzled everybody.

Presently Rough Rob sauntered in and dropped into a seat facing the poker sport.

"Why so glum?" he asked.

"I'm a white horse, just at present," was the response.

"White horse?" queried the proprietor. "What do you mean by that, Poker Phil? What have you got to do with a white horse?"

"Why, I'm the paired with the red-headed girl, you know."

Rough Rob laughed.

"I didn't catch on," he declared. "But, is it true that you are the right man? You had ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"Do you believe it, too? Confound her, it isn't so, but rather than meet her and have a scene I have dropped in here to keep out of her sight."

"It's funny the picture could be so like you and not be yours. How do you account for that, Phil?"

"I don't account for it, confound it all. Talk about something else."

"All right; what do you think about these notices that have been discovered on the bank door?"

"I think they are just what they set forth to be."

"Then you believe Deadwood Dick is really in town?"

"The mayor says it is his signature sure enough."

"Then that ought to settle it. But, there is no one knows the writing on the other note, is there?"

"No, I guess not. But, then, there is no chance there for any one to recognize much about it, for you see the words have been printed out."

"That's so. If the last one tells the truth, though, there is no use in looking further for the murderer, for he has taken himself off, and may be many miles from here by this time."

"If it does tell the truth."

"Why shouldn't it?"

"I give it up. Maybe to lead Deadwood Dick astray."

"Can't quite agree with you there. Should think the rascal would have been afraid of putting a clew into his hands."

"Oh, well, I don't know; I only hope they will get the murderer before he does get out of reach, and give him what he deserves, for Bordwell was too good a man not to be avenged."

"You are right, there. Wonder what progress this man Marblehead is making on the case?"

"Can't say. Nothing very big, I guess. Ha! here he comes now, and the mayor and Kellock with him."

True enough, these were just entering.

They took seats at a table by themselves quite a distance down the room, and continued a conversation they were holding as they entered.

"Are you going to try your luck to-night?" asked Rob of Poker Phil.

"I don't know whether there is any use or not," was the sport's response.

"You had better. You are acquainted with the stranger, and he looks as if a game wouldn't hurt him. Tackle him and see what you can do."

"Safer to leave him to you, I guess, till my luck turns."

Billy Bucket had heard enough now to convince him of one thing, and that was that the sport had had nothing to do with the crime.

"Rough Rob and Poker Phil rose and went over to the table where the new-comers had taken seats, leaving Billy alone and rather lonesome. He was not alone long, however, for Johnny Smile and Old Avalanche soon came in.

These joined Billy, and while they compared notes they were interested in what was going on about them.

It was later on, when the games were open and the place was going almost at full blast, that Simon Singletree and Mrs. Grandis entered.

The woman, a head the taller, and her hand upon the lawyer's arm and he was escorting her along as though they were entering upon the floor of a grand ball-room.

At sight of them a murmur ran round the room, and all eyes were fixed upon the woman and Poker Phil, by turns.

The woman and the little lawyer were eagerly scanning the room as they advanced.

"Do you see him, Simon Singletree?" the woman asked, in her rasping voice.

"No, Mrs. Grandis, I dot not, was the respectful answer.

"Ask permission for me to speak and tell my story," the woman ordered.

"Gentlemen," said the worried-looking lawyer, "Mrs. Grandis would like to tell her story to you. Will you permit her to do so?"

"Yes, certainly," answered the proprietor of the place, with a wink and a nod in the direction of Poker Phil. He was eager, evidently, to see some fun, and fun was naturally looked for.

The woman of the red hair and pointed nose mounted a chair as if this were not the first time she had addressed an audience upon that painful subject, her truant husband, and after clearing her throat and making ready she began her tale of woe.

"My friends," she commenced, "I am here for the purpose of telling you the simple story of my wrongs, hoping that you will give me your sympathy and assist me to recover that runaway husband of mine. Look at me, and say whether you see in me anything deserving of treatment so cruel at the hands of one whom I had raised up from a nobody to share with me my own position in the social world."

She paused at that and looked around for some one to respond.

"You ar' a daisy, and no mistake," one man ventured to declare from the far end of the room.

"I was superior to Brentwood Witherington Grandis, anyhow," the woman went on. "Superior in wealth, station and everything else. He was a poor man, a nobody, I may say, and I stooped to him. I took him and made a gentleman of him, and he has basely deserted me after all my kindness to him. I feel so bad I could cry. Here is his likeness, gentlemen," showing a poster like that which the lawyer had posted up in the hotel office. "Tell me, have you ever seen him here? I would give anything to get him back again."

"Let's see ther pictur', ma'm," one fellow requested.

"Certainly. Hand him the paper, Simon Singletree, and let him see if he recognizes the face."

Poker Phil was keeping out of sight as much as possible without really making noticeable efforts to do so, and the woman had not yet got sight of him.

The lawyer took the poster from the woman's hand and passed it to the man who had asked to see it, and the moment he looked upon the pictured face he gave a start of recognition and cried out:

"Why, darn et, et's Poker Phil, that's who et is!"

"Ha!" exclaimed the woman, eagerly, "you recognize the face! Who is this Poker Phil you speak about?"

"Why," and the man looked around the room to find Phil, "thar he is, ma'm, right over thar. Come up, Phillip, and acknowledge ther corn. Ther pictur' speaks fur etself."

Poker Phil looked daggers at the man.

This, as he knew, was a "put-up" job for the sake of a little fun at his expense.

The woman, following the direction of the man's index, had craned her neck to get a sight of Phil, and now seeing him she cried out:

"Ah-ha! you rascal! I have found you at last!"

Down from her chair she jumped and forward she ran, her hair looking redder than ever, her nose white at the tip, and her voice at its sharpest pitch of harshness.

Phil arose as he saw her coming, and waved her away with his hand.

"Hold on, madam! Don't be too sure of this

thing," he said. "Just keep cool for a moment till we—"

The woman had stopped short, her eyes flashing, and she interrupted him.

"Brentwood Witherington Grandis!" she screamed. "Dare you talk to me like that? I'll pull every hair out of your head, see if I don't."

"My name is not Grandis," declared Phil, coolly. "I never saw you before in my life. And as for helping you discover your lost man, I wouldn't do it, for I admire the sense he showed in running away from you."

The woman stood and stared at Phil with her eyes at the widest. It was patent to all that her truant husband had never dared to talk to her like this.

CHAPTER XI.

PHIL'S FORCED RETREAT.

THIS was just what the patrons of the Monte Carlo enjoyed. It was fun for everybody save those immediately concerned.

"It is no use, Poker Phil," some one spoke up. "That picture settles it, for it is yours and no mistake. The only difference is that you have slicked up a little since it was taken."

"Him!" cried the angry female. "Of course it is. Do you suppose I wouldn't know my own husband? He was willing enough to marry me, because he knew I was rich, and now I am going to make him stick to his bargain. Brent Grandis, you come right along with me."

She reached for Phil as she spoke, but he pushed her hand aside.

"Keep your hands off, madam," he ordered. "I tell you there is a mistake here. My name is not Grandis, and never was. My name is Philip Harley. I have to admit that picture looks something like me, but that is nothing. I tell you I am not the man, and that must settle it. Now do not annoy me further."

"Well, well, well!" the woman cried in sheer amazement. "How in the world did you ever pick up the spunk to talk like that to me, Brent Grandis? But, I'll take all that out of you when I get you home again. I was bound to have you. I would have scoured the world till doomsday but what I'd have had you. It is no use your denying it, for as that gentleman said, the picture speaks for itself. You can't get out of it."

"I don't know what you are going to do about it," remarked the sport, as coolly as possible under the circumstances, for he was heated and worried. "I tell you I am not the man, and I defy you to prove it."

"Prove it," cried the woman. "What more proof do I want? Here is your picture, and there is not a man in the room but will say it's you. What more proof do I need, I would like to know? If you don't come with me this instant you will be sorry for it, that I tell you."

"Well, I'll not go with you. You are crazy, or you are trying to get up a blackmail scheme, one or the other. I want you to go off and leave me alone."

"Crazy! Blackmail! What do you mean by such talk to me, your true wife? Many another woman would let you go to the dogs, instead of spending a whole year looking for you, and that's what I ought to have done. But, you are mine, and I am going to have you. Simon Singletree, do your duty."

The nervous, fussy little lawyer came forward at once, with a legal-looking document in hand.

"Mr.—er—um—ah—that is to say, Mr.—er—"

"Lay your hand on me and I'll pitch you through the window!" cried the sport in deadly earnest. "I'll do for you what this woman's sex debars me from doing to her, much as she deserves it."

"You would throw me through a window, would you, Brent Grandis? I'd like to see you try it, that's all. I'd show you who would do the throwing, and I'll bet it wouldn't be you. Take him, Simon Singletree, for he is a coward at heart and would not dare to touch a boy."

"You'll find out your mistake if you try it on," cried the sport.

Everybody in the place was greatly amused, now, and cries of all kinds were heard urging the woman on.

It was believed, generally, that Poker Phil was really the woman's runaway, for there was nothing in proof so strong as the likeness, and that was almost perfect.

The lawyer made another move to obey.

"I have warned you," cried the sport. "Don't you touch me, sir."

"But, the law," said the fussy man. "What

are you going to do with the law—law, sir? Better take care, sir."

"The law be blowed! What is that paper you have got there, anyhow?"

"It's a warrant of arrest, sir, a warrant of arrest; and you had better submit quietly or I shall have to use force."

"Ha! Ha! What force could you use? I'd dump you in one second. This is enough of this, now. I tell you I am not the man you are looking for, and that settles it."

"I appeal to the witnesses around us," cried the woman. "Isn't this man the original of the likeness I hold here, gentlemen?"

"Yes! Yes! Yes!" from several.

"Tag to him! Take him home!"

Such, and a hundred and one other cries, greeted her.

"You see it is no use, Mr. Grandis," urged the lawyer. "We have got you, and you must come with us."

"But, won't you listen to reason? I am not the man at all! Confound you, anyhow, for a pair of fools—"

"You call me a fool, Brent Grandis? I'll tear your eyes out! After the way I have supported you in your laziness, when I took you in out of the street, and you with not a second shirt to your back—"

This was interrupted by a howl of laughter, and Poker Phil grew furious.

"See here! This thing has gone about far enough," he cried.

"I think it has, too!" squealed the woman.

"You are on the wrong track here, for I tell you again that I am not Brent Grandis, and never was."

"And I tell you you are Brent Grandis, and always was. Don't you suppose I know you? You are a little fatter than you look in the picture, but you have been living high, I suppose."

"Woman, you never saw me before in your life."

"Bah! talk to the wind."

"Where did you marry that man Grandis?"

"Marry you, you mean? I married you down at Galveston, that is where, where you used to be a conductor on a street car, and where I first saw you. Oh! you need not try to bluff me off that way."

"I never was in Galveston in my life. When was this you claim to have married me?"

"It will be three years coming the tenth of this month, that is when, as you know well enough."

"Then it will only be necessary for me to prove where I was at that time to disprove what you assert, madam."

"Oh! will it, now? You seem to have more brain lately than you used to have, Brent Grandis, but that will not serve you."

"You have got to give me the chance to prove what I say."

"The proof here is all that is needed, and you are going back to Texas with us when the next stage starts."

"We'll see about that. I'll begin to get in my proof at once, and in the course of a week or two I'll be able to satisfy everybody just who and what I am. Now, be off and leave me alone."

"A week or two! Good mercy, do you think I will wait here a week or two for you to make up a batch of lies to deceive folks? Well, I guess not. You are going to Texas with us when we start. Simon Singletree, why don't you arrest him and drag him out of here?"

"He knows better than to try it on, that is why," cried the sport.

"Sir, you are opposing the law—the law," the lawyer urged. "You had better submit quietly, so that I may not have to use force—"

"Force your grandmother! Men of Pistol Pocket, this is either a mistake or a scheme at blackmail, and I don't know which, but it's one or the other, and I demand a fair hearing in the affair."

"That is no more than just," asserted Rough Rob.

"I want time to prove who I am and where I am from. I can satisfy you all, but it will take time, of course. I have lived here six months or more, but like most of you my past is unknown and in order to bring proof I must have time. Now, I propose to this woman that she give me time to satisfy her that she has made a mistake—"

"Time? Mistake? Men of this place, do you think there is any woman alive who would not know her own husband on sight?"

"Et don't look so," spoke up one old fellow.

"And it isn't so. Not only do I know him, but here I have brought with me all the way

from Texas a likeness of him, and what more can you ask?"

"Et's proof enough," shouted some one. "Poker Phil, ye might as well give et up and go along home like a good boy. Ther old woman hag got a big gun p'inted at ye, and ef ye don't go she may take ye."

"The proof does seem strong," now spoke up the mayor, calmly, as it to settle the affair for the time being at least. "However, since the young man is so positive in his denial he should be given a fair chance to clear himself. I think, madam, you had better give him the time he asks."

"Simon Singletree, do your duty!" commanded the woman, fiercely.

"Sir, I—I—I beg your pardon, but I must arrest you and take you—"

The little lawyer had reached out to take hold of the sport, but he was given a whirl that turned him around, and the sport's foot was planted under his coat with a force that lifted him clear from the floor.

"I'll show you how you'll arrest and take me," Phil cried. "If you come within reach of me again I'll give you one that will carry you through the window, and don't you forget it. And, woman, if you were a man I'd serve you in the same fashion, for you are enough to exasperate any one."

"Brent Grandis! What has come over you? You didn't use to dare speak to me like this."

"Which ought to satisfy that I am not the man you take me to be," the sport urged.

"But, I know you are."

"I'm going to prove that I am not."

"Haven't I proved to the satisfaction of all that you are?"

"No; nor can you. Out of my way, now, and do not provoke me to push you out of the way."

The sport stepped forward with the intention of leaving the place.

"Stop him!" cried the woman. "Do not let him get out of my sight or I'll never see him again. Simon Singletree, do your duty!"

"I—I begin to think maybe there may be a mistake," said the lawyer, as he rubbed himself ruefully.

"No! not there is no mistake! Do not let him go, good men!"

Phil was now making for the door.

Seeing that no one was going to respond to her call, the woman sprang after him herself and laid hold upon his coat; but, with an angry imprecation, the sport shook her off and bolted out, leaving the crowd roaring with laughter.

The woman covered her face with her hands for a few moments, but suddenly removing them she sprang at her lawyer, and after giving him a good shaking she laid hold upon his neck with her bony fingers and hustled him out and away. What she was going to do with him she did not say, but no one wanted to change places with him.

CHAPTER XII.

OLD AVALANCHE FINDS FAULT.

TREMENJUS old hambone what lodged in ther liver of Joner!" cried Old Avalanche, when the woman had gone out, making a pretense of wiping perspiration from his brow. "Ef that didn't remind me of my Sal Samantha nothin' ever did. Whirlin' twirlwinds of destructive demolishun ef I didn't expect ter see her lay hold onto him an' yank him right out of his breeches, almost; hambone, yes!"

"What do you think of the case, old man?" asked Rough Rob.

"What do I think on't? Why, I think ef I was that feller I wouldn't stop till I had laid a score o' miles 'tween me an' that female woman, that's what. If she ever gits them 'ar bony fingers o' hers into his locks he's a goner, you bet. I have bin thar, and I know how et is. Never told ye 'bout ther time Sal Samantha yanked the scalp right off'n me in a dozen places, did I?"

"No, I guess not."

"Tain't a long story. You see, she use ter p'int her finger at the clock when I was goin' out and she'd say 'Alvy, you be hyer when thet 'ar hand gits thar!' an' I was 'most allus a little ahead of ther hand, you bet. But, one time I wasn't, and that time she lit on me hard. She heerd me comin' slinkin' home, an' she kem out an' met me with a ruffled temper an' a flatiron. 'You ar' late!' she yelled, an' with that she up an' knocked my brains out. 'But I'll show ye!' she yelled again, an' then she laid hold onto my topknot."

"But, you said she had already knocked your brains out," Keeter remarked.

"What ef I did?" demanded the old scout. "Great hambone o' tremenjus tribblyashun! who is tellin' this story, you or me?"

"Go on," said the proprietor, with a wave of the hand to dismiss the point he had raised.

"I was thar," declared Old Avalanche, "and I'd orter know somethin' about et, I guess. She laid out my hair, as I was sayin', and then she made a run fer the cabin with me floppin' along after her and lettin' out a yell at every flop. And when she got to the door she jumped in and her foot hit the door and it swung to and left me on the outside. I was in a tremenjus fix then, you kin bet. Thar was Sal Samantha on the inside, and there was me on the outside, and and there she had hold o' my scalp-lock as if fer grim death. I yelled, an' Sal Samantha pulled, and dog my cats ef she didn't pull me right smack through the keyhole! And when I got a chance to see what damage I had suffered, drat me ef my scalp wasn't gone all around in spots."

The crowd laughed at the old scout's lie, but attention was soon drawn to something else.

A richly dressed woman had entered the place, and with a smile to all she advanced and took her place at the leading gaming-table.

"That is the queen of the place," explained Mayor Carleton to Willard Marblehead. "She is known as Gentle Janie."

"And she's a dazzler," Marblehead admitted. "Is she the wife of the proprietor?"

"It is not known if she is. She passes for a single woman."

"That's in the way of business. Her face must draw custom to the place, I should imagine."

"It undoubtedly does. See, there are several moths already fluttering around her candle to get their wings singed. And they are likely to get it, too."

"She is a good winner for the bank, eh?"

"Ask Poker Phil about that. She manages to keep him broke a good deal of his time."

"Hal is that the case? I may be able to make a point there."

"What's that you say?"

"I was talking to myself then. It is too bad the young man can't get even with her, for he seems like a decent sort of fellow."

"And I think he is, too."

"Why do you call him Poker Phil?"

"Because he is a winner at that game every time."

"Yet he plays a straight game?"

"Honest, you mean? Yes, so far as I know; no one has ever accused him of cheating."

"Then he should give his attention to that, I should say, and he might get even with the house somehow."

"The house does not run the poker games, though, but simply takes a percent. of the winnings for the privilege of playing here."

"And Phil plays?"

"Yes; till he has won something, when he turns right around and lets the tiger scratch it away from him again."

"I suppose it would be sweet for him to have revenge and beat the bank once, just to get even with the woman. He is not afraid of her, is he?"

"No; doesn't like her very well, for he lays his bad luck to her—and justly so, too. But, he never has money enough to stay in long enough to do anything with the game."

"I'll remember him and his troubles, and it is possible we may make use of him toward getting at the mystery of who killed Bordwell."

"You amaze me!"

They had been speaking in low tones.

"Do not mention it to any one," the detective cautioned.

"To be sure I shall not. I had begun to think you had forgotten about that case, Mr. Marblehead, and I am glad to find you have not."

"It is first on my mind," was the assurance. "Further, I want you to get a chance to speak to that eccentric old man in private, if you will, and set him to keep an eye upon that woman with the red hair and her lawyer."

"I can do that; but, surely, you do not mean to insinuate that they are in any way concerned."

"I do not say so, but I suspect that they are not what they seem."

"They shall be watched, then, and the old scout is just the man to do it, for he is as sly as an old rat and as sharp as a weasel."

"So I imagine him to be, the little I have seen of him. I am satisfied of one thing, in connection with this case, Mr. Carleton."

"And what is that?"

"That it was not the work of one man alone, but that it has been a well-laid scheme

and that it has been some time under contemplation."

"You don't say!"

"So I do say; and, it would not surprise me to hear of further robberies if it is not speedily broken up. I have looked around carefully, since you gave me permission to try my hand at it, and I have satisfied myself upon a good many points."

"And when will you know more about it? Do you think the murderer is still in the Pocket?"

"I do. Mind you, not a word of this to any one, no exceptions whatever, but wait and we shall see how it will come out."

"You have a positive clew, then?"

"I have. We must appear to be idle to-morrow, however."

They remained talking for some time, but no longer in private, for the others of their party joined in.

When they had satisfied themselves concerning some things that had brought them there, and had watched the playing at the table presided over by the card queen, they went away.

In the mean time Billy Bucket had gone out shortly after Poker Phil had left the room, and had followed the sport till he finally located him at his lodging-place, where he gave up the trail and went back to join Johnny.

The latter was not to be found, however, and Billy did not see him again that night.

Next morning when they met they compared notes at once.

"Where did you go to last night?" Billy eagerly demanded. "I couldn't find you anywhere."

"Why, I was after my game, of course, and I only wish now that Deadwood Dick would show up. I begin to think Marblehead don't know anything."

"You think his name is a fitting one, eh?"

"Blame me if I don't begin to think so. What has he been doing, anyhow? He hangs around with the mayor, and that's all."

"Yet he set us at work to shadow some persons for him."

"Yes, and he has put Old Avalanche at the same business, now."

"You don't say so! Who is he to watch?"

"The red-head woman and her lawyer—Hal! what am I thinkin' about?"

"What's the trouble now?"

"I begin to see into the detective's game now."

"Then you are ready to change your mind again, eh? You are like the wind, Johnny Smile."

"It's enough to keep anybody puzzled up, Billy. But, I see his game, now; he is letting us do the work so that the others will think he is doing nothing, so they will think there is no danger in him."

"You may be right."

"I know I am, now, when I come to think all about it. But, Billy, what did you find out about the sport?"

"Nothing to his hurt. What did you find out about Kellock?"

"That's hard to say, but I know there is something going on in which he has got a finger, for late last night I found him and that woman's lawyer talkin' together on the sly."

"And Old Avalanche has been set to watch the lawyer. There is something going to happen, sure as you live."

They were still talking when Old Avalanche came along and joined them.

"Great old osserified hambone what slid down ther gullick of Joner, till it touched bottom!" the old man cried. "Can't some o' you two tell me whar Deadwood Dicky is? Ef I was ever near to bein' a howlin', rantankerous specimen of a know-nothin' lunnytick, I'm on ther verge of et now; great hambone, yes!"

"What's happened, old man?"

"That's jest the worst of et; *nothin'* has happened. Ragin' tempests o' destructive demolishun, I wish somethin' would happen! Here we are without that murderer yet, and the funeral set and nothin' done yet. I begin ter think Marblehead had better 'a' been called Puddin'-head and been done with et. What do you say on that p'int?"

The lads gave him the conclusion they had just arrived at.

"Et does look a leetle different ter look at et in that light," the old man admitted. "But, I do only wish Deadwood Dicky was here; ef he wouldn't make the fur an' feathers fly you kin kick a hole in my old kerkis. Smokin' volkaners of pestiferous pesterlences, ef et ain't 'most enough ter make a man git mad. Did ye ever see a puzzler to beat et? Hyer Deadwood Dicky has been defied right in his teeth, an' he

is takin' et as quiet-like as if it wasn't nothin'. I'm jest about ready ter chuck up ther sponge, I am; great currogated old hambone, yes!"

CHAPTER XIII.

DICK'S LITTLE SCHEME.

DURING that forenoon Mr. Willard Marblehead had a considerable number of callers in his rooms at the hotel. None of them, however, saw his wife, who managed to be engaged in another room. Nothing was thought of this, but the truth was she did not want to be seen just yet, particularly by Old Avalanche and Billy Bucket.

As she was without disguise, taking no active part in this case, they would certainly recognize her did they see her, and the secret would be out.

Old Avalanche and Billy were among the callers, as was also Johnny Smile.

They did not come together, but one at a time. Word had been passed to them by Sir Clyde that the detective desired to see them, and each took his turn in going up to the rooms.

Each in his turn was questioned concerning what he had learned about the person or persons he had been shadowing, and so well did Dick play his part that there was not the least suspicion aroused that he was the Prince of Pistol Pocket in disguise. It was a puzzle to them where Dick could be.

One of the callers was Poker Phil.

He, like the others, had been sent for on the quiet, and had made his way up, wondering what could be wanted of him.

Since the scene of the night before he had been trying to keep out of sight of the red-headed female with the sharp nose, and he did not relish the idea of visiting the hotel, but he went.

"You sent for me, Mr. Marblehead?" he asked on entering Dick's presence.

"Yes, Mr. Harley, I sent for you," answered Dick. "Sit down and we'll have a little talk. I'll tell you what I wanted of you."

The sport took a chair and Dick went on.

"The mayor told me something about you last night, and I have taken some interest in you."

"You say the mayor told you about me?"

"Yes, sir."

"What could he tell you about me?"

"Well, he said you are a good poker-player, but that you get scratched badly every time you tackle the tiger."

"He told you the truth in the last instance, anyhow. Luck has been all against me of late."

"But, I don't see what call he had to rehearse my affairs to a new-comer."

"Don't blame the mayor, sir; I questioned him."

"Then I may ask what business it is of yours what my private affairs are?"

This was to Dick's liking. He saw that Poker Phil had considerable of spirit when occasion required its showing.

"It is none of my business, sir, but, as I said, I have taken some interest in you, and I may be able to do you a good turn if you will allow me to do so. Are you disposed to hear me?"

"Certainly; there is no reason why I shouldn't; but I can't see your object. I know you have an ax to grind somewhere."

This was better still. Dick saw he had no fool to deal with.

"Then I'll come right to the point and let you in on the ground floor, as it is sometimes expressed. How would you like to go to the faro table to-night and break the bank?"

The sport smiled.

"You are talking wild now," he declared.

"Not a bit of it," Dick assured.

"You mean to say I could break that bank?"

"Yes, with my help."

"Hal! I knew you were in it for something. What have you got against that concern?"

"That part of it I prefer to keep to myself for the present. I have no desire to make money out of it, however. I'll tell you what I'll do."

"What will you do?"

"I'll put up the money for you—that is to say, will give you a big stake to go in with, and whatever you win shall be yours. If you lose I'll stand the loss. Is that agreeable?"

"It's a crazy man's idea."

"You call me crazy, then?"

"You seem to be, on that question."

"Well, have it that way if you want to."

"And you really mean business, and want me to go in?"

"I certainly do. What do you say to it? Will you take hold of it and try it?"

"Let me hear the rest of it, first."

"You think I am holding something back?"

"I know you are. You have some conditions you want me to agree to which you have not stated yet. As I said before, you have an ax to grind, and I know it."

"And as I said before, I prefer to keep my motive a secret for the present. The only restriction I have to lay upon you is that you will be guided by my judgment now and then as you play."

"You have the right to that, since it's your money I'm to risk."

"You agree to it, then?"

"Certainly; but how will you be able to indicate your wishes? No double work is allowed there."

"We can arrange a set of signals in five minutes which will answer our purpose and yet which cannot possibly be detected."

Dick could see that he had engaged the service of the sport, and that he was more than eager to go into the thing as it had been proposed. The only thing was to be sure of his obeying signals.

"I'll bet you are no stranger to the green cloth," the sport declared.

"Well, I am not, though I never made a profession of gaming. I have enjoyed the confidence of many noted sharps, and am up to all the tricks."

"Then you think Gentle Janie has been cheating me?"

"I can't say that, but I think she has a fine system of playing, and it will take a long purse to overreach her."

"I have often wished I had the rags to stay in, sometimes."

"You'll have them now, for I'll heel you well. What is the limit of the bank?"

"I have never heard a limit set. When only we ordinary fellows are the buckers they proclaim that it is unlimited. I heard once it was set at fifty thousand dollars."

"We can top their pile, then, every time. We must make them openly avow it to be unlimited, however, and it must be done in such a way that no suspicion can be aroused. Would it awaken suspicion if you were to ask the limit?"

"It would, sure. They know I never go in with more than a hundred or two to back me."

"Then I'll see that some one else does it for you. Now, you understand what I mean, do you not? And you will play me fair?"

"Yes, to both. It will be sweet revenge for me if I can get the bulge on this Gentle Janie for once and break the bank for Rough Rob."

"Well, here is your chance to do it. But, bear in mind you must not let it out that I am your backer. You will no doubt be asked where you got your pile."

"I'll take care of that part of it. But, where will you manage to give me the money so that it will not be seen? Shall I call here again about the time the game opens to night?"

"I'll give it to you now."

"What! You mean to trust me with it till night?"

"Why, yes, certainly; I take you to be a pretty square sort of fellow."

"I'm square with my friends, every time. I don't want you to trust me, however. You keep it."

"Why?"

"I might get to playing before night."

"Then playing is a passion with you, is it? Too bad, if so."

"I had rather play than eat, Mr. Marblehead. If I could give but one bit of advice to young men, I'd say—Never play cards! They are Satan's shuffle-board!"

"I would add some other things to that," declared Dick. "My advice to all boys and young men is, first, last and all the time—Don't drink, don't gamble, don't waste time!"

"I wish I had had just such advice to start with a dozen years ago. I take it you have a history, Mr. Marblehead."

"Every man has a history, Phil, and he makes it himself. I know what you mean, however. I have had a world of experience, and the advice I would give is such as I have proved to be the best."

"It is too late for me, however," said the sport, with a sigh.

"I was not giving it to you, but we were merely comparing notes on that subject. If you think the temptation would be too great, I will hold the money till night and give it to you then."

"Yes, do that. And I'll pay it back to you, every dollar."

"No, no; it is not a loan to you, Phil; I risk

it myself, you know. If you add to it, return me the amount I stake; if you lose, then you are out nothing. But, I must express one more condition."

"What is that?"

"You must play for cash, and nothing else."

"They don't do that there; they play for checks on the local bank."

"We don't want it that way. You must have it understood that you are playing cash against cash, and nothing else."

"They won't do it."

"Yes they will, too. They will find the sentiment of the crowd against any other plan. Besides, the bank will be closed to-morrow, and you can say you don't want any checks."

"Well, I'll try it that way."

"And, another thing is this: Whatever money you win from them, do not put it with this I give you, but in another pocket. Keep it separate, for I want to get hold of all I can of their money."

"All right."

"And, one thing more, don't you go into the game till you have heard them tell some one the bank is unlimited."

After that some time was spent in agreeing upon a set of signals to be used, and finally Poker Phil took his leave, and it seemed that he went off with a lighter step than he had brought with him.

When he had gone out of the room Kodak Kate entered.

"Well, what think you?" asked Dick.

"I am sure that man is innocent of any part in the crime," was the positive response.

"And so am I, now," agreed Dick. "There is going to be a circus here this evening, Kate, and I'm sorry you cannot be in it. But, it's better so."

CHAPTER XIV.

DICK'S POINT SCORED.

THAT day was a quiet one at Pistol Pocket.

Quite a number of buildings were draped, out of respect for the dead cashier of the bank, and there was a general feeling of mourning in the town.

Still, your "city" of the wild Southwest is not like an Eastern town. The mourners were sadly in the minority, and behind the scenes, so to speak, there was little to indicate that anything so tragic had happened.

There was an undercurrent ripe for vengeance that was far stronger than any feeling of mourning. That Mr. Bordwell had been killed in so dastardly a manner was what galled these citizens of Pistol Pocket, and they wanted to get hold of the man who had done the deed.

Then, too, there was the greatest curiosity to find out where Deadwood Dick was in hiding, or who he was if he was among them in disguise. There were a good many suspects around the town, but one by one they were cleared of the suspicion of being the Prince of the West, and by night the number had dwindled down, till finally the last one was checked off.

The posters were still on the door of the bank.

There was, first, the offer of reward; then the warning of Deadwood Dick; and then, the boldest and blackest of all, was the bold defiance.

And it was this that galled the citizens as much as the fact that the murderer was still at large. To think that their hero and patron, the Prince of Pistol Pocket, had been so openly defied, was too much.

Where could the redoubtable Richard be? Why was he silent? Why did he not come out with a flourish of trumps and turn the camp inside out to bring the mystery to light? But, then, as the cooler heads declared, that was not Deadwood Dick's way. It was quite probable that he knew what he was about.

Mrs. Grandis and her lawyer were about the camp a good deal, looking for the Poker Prince, who wisely kept out of their way.

They haunted the Monte Carlo, but they did not find him there.

Old Avalanche, Billy Bucket, and Johnny Smile, were around, seemingly doing nothing, but each had a work to perform and was doing it well.

The coming of the stages, that day, brought little if any excitement. As it was known that the Prince of the Pocket was in town, somewhere, the stage had no longer any attraction for those who had looked so eagerly for his coming.

So passed the day.

In the evening the resorts opened as usual, and even some that displayed the funeral drappings without had nothing of a funeral aspect within.

It was about the time when Gentle Janie usu-

ally made her appearance at the Monte Carlo that our friends entered that resort, not all together, but singly or by twos.

There were, first, Mayor Carleton and Willard Marblehead, who strolled in leisurely and took seats in a quiet corner.

Others, then, were Dunbar Kellock, Joe Garry, Billy Bucket, Johnny Smile, Old Avalanche, Poker Phil, and those who usually found themselves in their company, severally.

The coming of Gentle Janie, the card queen, was looked for each moment, but before her arrival entered Mrs. Grandis upon the arm of her lawyer, Mr. Singletree, to the delight of the crowd in general, who looked for more fun.

Poker Phil was seen to move uneasily in his chair, and was heard to mutter something about a confounded red-headed nuisance, while the woman of the red hair and rasping voice looked around over the assembly evidently in quest of him, and Old Avalanche excitedly called out:

"Hyer she is ergain, Poker Phil, hyer she is ergain, and her nose is white at ther tip. You had better take up your heels and meander, ef you vally your peace of mind and your scalp-lock; Lor' Jerusha, yes! Great hambone what kerflummuxed ther diarframm of old Joner, ef she don't remind me of Sal Samantha, when she used ter daub on ther war-paint an' go fer me with ther whisker end of ther broom!"

The woman had stopped and was staring at the old scout, her nose decidedly white at the tip, her eyes flashing fire, and her breast heaving with rage, and no sooner had he stopped than she made a dart at him.

"I'll show you how to insult a lady!" she cried. "I'll give you what you want! I'll slap your wrinkled old face for you, that's what I'll do for you, you mean old thing, you! I'll make you see more stars than there are in the sky above! I'll give you something to remember—"

"Lor' Jerusha!" gasped Avalanche, as he beat a hasty retreat. "Don't do et, ma'm, don't do et! Ef you only knowed how much you remind me of my Sal Samantha, you would let up, fer you have got me all of a tremble: great hambone, yes! Great currogated cans of devastatin' demolishun, somebody keep her off! I'll never mention et again, ma'm; never, never, never!"

With precipitate haste the old scout had put several tables and chairs between himself and the enraged woman, and there he stood waving her off with both hands, while the crowd looked on and laughed their enjoyment.

"See that you mind your own business, after this, then," the woman cried. "I, have a good mind to tear your eyes out, as it is, and if you say one word more I'll do it, too."

"Great colossal hambone! You won't hear me peep ergain, ma'm; great condensed conglomerashuns o' misery, no! I'm done, ma'm; great hambone, yes!"

"See that you remember it, then. If you don't, I'll make Simon Singletree arrest you."

"That's a wilter, ma'm; I have right in."

And he caved.

"But, it is *you* I want to deal with," cried the woman, as the old scout sat down, and she turned upon Poker Phil. "For the last time, will you admit that you are Brentwood Witherington Grandis, and come along home with me?"

"I will not, madam," was the cold response.

"I have told you that I am not that man, and I will not put up with any more of your nonsense. I shall take steps to prove my identity, and satisfy you as soon as I can. In the mean time if you do not keep away from me I'll have you arrested."

"Oh-ho! And you dare to talk so to me? Time was, Brent Grandis, when you would whine at my feet like a whipped cur—"

"The more fool Brent Grandis, then," snapped the sport.

"Simon Singletree! Do you hear him?" cried the woman. "I command you to come right here and pull his nose for him."

"I—I—I—I think there has been a mistake," gasped the fussy little lawyer. "I cannot think this is your husband, ma'm, much as he looks like the picture."

"It's well for you that you do think so," declared the sport. "If you come within reach of me I'll give you the grandest bounce you ever read about, and don't you forget it. I'll paralyze you."

"Moderation, madam, moderation," advised the lawyer. "I really do think we have made a mistake, and we had better go slow and give the gentleman a chance to bring his proof."

"Well, he really don't act like Brent Grandis, and that is true," the woman had to admit. "He has grown very brave since I saw him. He wouldn't have dared to talk to me in this way, for if he had I would have—"

She was speaking through her tightly-shut teeth, and she advanced a step toward the sport as if to show just what she would have done.

"Hold your horses, madam," the sport said, motioning her off. "If you lay a finger on me I'll have you arrested to keep the peace."

The woman drew back.

"Can it be possible that there is a mistake?" she said, wonderingly.

"You'll find there is," said the sport.

"Moderation, madam," advised the lawyer.

"Hambone, yes!" cried Old Avalanche. "Be jest as moderashun as you can, madam, fer the love of goodness, do. I'm all in a drip o' sweat at ther recollection of Mrs. Old Avalanche that was. I never told ye 'bout the time she made me—"

"I'll remind you of her a good deal more, if you don't shut your old trap this minute!" cried the woman. "I'll make you wish that you had never been born. You had better slink down behind there, you old knave! Come on, Simon Singletree, and escort me out of this vile den."

The lawyer was prompt to obey that call, and with the woman upon his arm he got away as speedily as possible.

The crowd laughed over the matter, but the coming of Gentle Janie soon gave them something else to think about, and the matter was dismissed.

The card queen opened her game, and soon her invitation rung out:

"Make your play, gentlemen."

It was at this point that the mayor of the Pocket rose and addressed the proprietor of the place.

"Mr. Keeter," he said, "before you begin the business of the evening I must inform you that it will be useless for you to draw checks upon the bank to-night."

"How's that?" Rough Rob demanded. "Won't the bank be opened after the funeral to-morrow?"

"No, it will not; and—"

"But, I have a deposit there, Mr. Carleton, and I have a right to check it out when and how I please—"

"I do not deny that, Mr. Keeter, but the robbery was so complete that we cannot open till we get more funds, and that will not be till next week. I make this announcement in order that players may know what to expect."

"But, my checks are good, and—"

"That is true, and they will be honored in due time, but not to-morrow. I felt it my duty to tell you this before your game commenced, so that both you and the players might know what to expect. This is nowise a question of the value of your checks, but of the bank's ability to cash them."

"Well, it's all right, of course, and I can't complain. Players will understand it."

"That's bad fer me," spoke up Old Avalanche, then. "I was goin' ter risk a couple of dollars ter-night, but I want ter play fer cash ef I do. I don't know nothin' 'bout checks; hambone, no!"

"Well, old man, I guess we can manage to give you the cash if you win anything."

"Then I'm in et, sure. Great currogated signs o' tremenjus demolishun, I used ter know ther day when I could bu't a bank an' not half try. Didn't think nothin' of doin' that an' then sowin' my winnin's on ther street."

"You must have been a terror in your prime."

"Great hambone, don't mention et!" And the old scout was making his way to the table. "I'm what's left of the oncet great Injun epydemick, the great ragin' triangle of ther Nor'west. Used ter eat a couple of Injuns afore breakfast an' another fer an appetizer fer supper. We was a whirlwind o' devastashun, me and Prudence Cordeliar and Florence Night-in-a-gale; great hambone, yes! What's ther limit o' this hyar consarn; me purty miss?"

"It is unlimited, sir," answered Gentle Janie. And that was what Deadwood Dick had been playing for; he had won all around.

CHAPTER XV.

BUCKING THE TIGER.

OLD AVALANCHE began his playing on a small scale, as he declared he had to. He displayed two silver dollars, and one of those a Mexican, and declared that it was either make or break with him.

He staked both coins at once, and to the surprise of many both of them won for the old man.

"Rab fer me!" the old fellow cried. "Lor' Jerusha! but I guess the old Injun epydemick is around yet, some. Great hambone, but

wasn't that done slick! Two to the good, and now hyar's fer four this time."

He placed his bets again, and again he came out winner. This made him feel particularly good, and he let off a laugh that was contagious.

"Priceless hambone what supplied ther need o' Joner in ther days o' devastatin' famine in ther land o' Nod!" he cried. "Haw! haw! haw! Wasn't that jest as easy as wakin' up out of a cat-nap? Wull, I should cough up a cat ef et wasn't. I'm in et, folks, clear up to my chin. Let 'em slide ergain, gal."

Again did he win, and he kept on winning, without a single loss against him. Never had the Monte Carlo seen such a run of luck as this. And each loss to the bank had been met with cash.

Old Avalanche was almost beside himself, and other players at the table were falling in behind his lead and the bank was beginning to suffer. The dealer, however, remained as cool as ice, and Rough Rob took it all as a joke, so far.

"Your luck will turn, old man," he declared. "The tide does not run in one direction forever."

"Let 'er turn," cried the old scout. "I'll know enough ter stop when it begins ter go out. This is ther richest streak I hev struck in a dog's age; et is, by ther eternal hambone!"

"This is the swim you ought to be in, Poker Phil," remarked Sir Clyde.

"I am going in," declared the sport, who had approached the table. "Seems to me I ought to hit something here."

"Come in, if you have got a stake to lose," invited the dealer. "I am in need of some change now, Phil. Have you been making another stake at poker?"

"Yes, I have," was the answer.

"All right, come and let me relieve you of it, then."

"I'll do it on one condition. I'll play cash against cash. No checks for me, if I win."

"Very well, sir, I guess we can accommodate you."

The sport displayed a very small wad of bills.

"And remember et's unlimited, too," cried Old Avalanche, joyously. "Come right in with me, and see ef we can't make 'em holler 'nuff. If I was a drinker, hang my dorg ef I wouldn't go and git rip-stavin' drunk."

It was so understood, that the game was unlimited, and it was likewise understood that the sport was playing cash against cash. No chips or checks were to be in it in any way whatever. And so, under such conditions the game was begun anew with an added interest.

The sport followed the lead of Old Avalanche, and the very first turn of the cards lost him a game.

"Destruction o' Babylon!" the old scout cried.

"Hyar ther tide turns, and right hyer I stop. Great hambone, pard, but you are the Joner of this consarn, sure. I'm done; great hambone, yes! You have sp'ilt a good thing, and have sp'ilt et bad, too. Your name is Dennis and mine is Mud."

"It is just my luck," the Poker Prince declared. "Did you say this bank is unlimited, Gentle Janie?"

The query raised a laugh, and the girl answered that it was.

"Because I have a pretty fat stake," declared the sport, "and I am going in to make or break, one or the other. Here's a hundred on the ace, just for a feeler."

This was reckless playing for a man like the sport.

"You had better take it easy," cautioned Rough Rob. "Not that it is anything to me, but your pocket won't hold out if you meet with a loss or two."

"Let it go, then," said the sport, carelessly.

The cards were dealt and the Poker Prince won—to the surprise of all.

"Hal! that reminds me of old times," he cried. "Now I'll try it again here, and we'll see how it will go this time. Let 'em go, Gentle Janie."

The woman dealt again, and presently the right card appeared and again it was in the favor of the hitherto luckless sport.

"That's ther stuff!" cried Old Avalanche. "I guess you are takin' et up at ther place whar I left off. Keep it up, pard, and you'll fetch 'em."

And so Poker Phil did.

He played heavily, heavily for him, and won in almost every instance. And it was soon found that he was having a big stroke of luck.

"This is just the turn I have been holding back for," he presently cried. "I am

in it now to stay, you bet. Here's a cool thousand on the queen, now, and only one more in the box."

"You don't mean it, do you?" asked Rough Rob.

"Money talks," cried the sport. "Cover that pile and say nothing."

The money was put up, and the cards were dealt again, and as before the Poker Prince came out best.

"This is glorious!" he cried, as if in keenest delight. "I have been waiting for this, you bet! Here we are again, this time five thousand on the king. Come and see me, Gentle Janie."

"I'll have to ask for a check, Mr. Keeter," the dealer said.

"Nothing but cash," cried Poker Phil. "That was the agreement, and I leave it to the crowd."

The crowd supported him strongly.

"Well, I guess I can scrape it up in my clothes," growled Rough Rob, "but this is more than I looked for. All the money of any account is in the bank, you know, and I depend on my checks."

"I know, but I may want to leave town before the bank opens again. That female is getting too determined to suit my taste, you know."

"Well, here's the cash."

"Let 'em go."

The cards were dealt, and after several turns the winner came out for the sport again.

"Glorious!" he cried. "This is some revenge for all the losses I have had here. Don't be afraid, now, but meet me on the spot. Here's twenty thousand dollars at one crack."

"Thunder!" cried the proprietor, "I can't stand that!"

"You'll have to, if the game is unlimited, and you say it is."

"But, you'll have to play against checks."

"On a closed bank? Not any. This is money against money."

The bait was big, and the gambler felt sure that he would come in for a share of the wealth Poker Phil had so suddenly acquired.

"You seem to have become flush all of a sudden," he said, in an insinuating manner.

"Where did you get such a windfall, anyhow?"

"You don't know but that I have had it in my inside pocket all along," was the retort. "Maybe I have only been waiting for a change of the tide, as the old man here puts it."

"Well, I have got some money up-stairs, but I didn't want to break into that when I had a bank deposit to draw on."

"You will have to put it up," cried the sport, wild with impatience, or appearing so to be. "Your game is a public one, and you have got to meet your players. Come, if you want to finger any of this stuff get a move on you."

"All right, I'll do it, and maybe the tiger will tame you before you get through."

"I'll stand it if he does, so don't let that stop you."

Everybody in the room was now wild with the excitement of the moment, and when Rough Rob left the room they could hardly wait for his return.

When he came he carried a hand-bag in which was a large quantity of money, and from which he took out enough to meet the wager the Poker Prince had laid. It was a sum to take away the breath of the novice, but these men were cool about it.

The game progressed, and the sport won.

"Curse your luck!" Rough Rob cried. "Are you in partnership with the devil to-night?"

"No, for I can go him one better," answered Phil. "My partner beats him, every time. This luck is glorious! Here, I'll put the whole sum on the jack, and if you want it, put up."

For the first time the nerve of the professional seemed to waver, and he turned slightly pale.

The bait was even greater than before, however, and the temptation in proportion. He could not withstand it. If he won it would replace a good deal of the loss he had already suffered.

"I'll cover it if I have enough money," he declared. "If I haven't, you must take a check for the balance. You are pushing me hard this time."

"Well, count up and I'll do that if you fall short."

The proprietor counted his money and found that he had enough and to spare, and he put up the stake.

If there had been excitement before, what was to be said of it now! For the first time the fingers of the dealer trembled as she dealt out the cards.

Willard Marblehead and Sir Clyde Carleton were among those who had pressed near to look on, and in the most quiet and unobservant way

the detective was giving the Poker Prince signals how to conduct his play.

The cards came out, and Phil won again!

"Hooray!" he yelled, jerking off his hat and swinging it wildly. "This is the hour I have been looking forward to! This is worth ten years of my life! Gentle Janie and Rough Rob, I have blistered you this time, and no mistake. Dare you see me any further?"

"We'll see you to the end, now," said Rough Rob, grimly. "You shall not get away with that money without one more effort on our part. Put up your bet."

"All right, there you are, a cool hundred thousand on the tray. Cover it if you can and dare. Ha! ha! ha! I am going to break the bank this time or come out with my skin scratched off, one or the other. What do you say?"

"I can't cover it," the gambler had to admit. "I can make it about forty thousand, and you'll have to take my check for part of that. But, make smaller bets and give me a show, won't you?"

"It is a make or break," declared the sport. "I'll put my hundred thousand against your pile and the Monte Carlo thrown in."

"I'll do it," cried the gambler, pale to the lips. "If you win I am a beggar. Here's my cash, and here's my check for all I have in the bank, and the Monte Carlo is here to speak for itself. Run the cards, Janie."

CHAPTER XVI.

DEADWOOD DICK DISCLOSES.

SILENCE prevailed. A pin might have been heard to drop in any part of the room. Never had the Monte Carlo, or even Pistol Pocket, seen anything like this. It was the wonder of the day, and the on-lookers were held spell-bound.

No sound was to be heard save the metallic click of the box as the cards were drawn from it one by one, and it seemed as if the end of the suspense would never come. And it was, indeed, an unusual long run before the deciding card came to light, and everybody was anxious to the last degree.

But, it came at last.

The card was drawn, and at sight of it Gentle Janie sunk back in her chair pale and overcome.

The Poker Prince had won, and with a wild cheer he threw his hat in the direction of the ceiling to give vent to his feelings. His revenge was now complete for all the losses he had received hitherto.

Rough Rob was upon his feet, and with one hand resting on the corner of the table he seemed to have a hard matter to control himself. His face was hard and drawn and more than once his hand gave a nervous motion as if to seek a weapon. That, he was aware, would be fatal to him.

"Hold on byer, a minnit," one rough fellow spoke up, at the critical moment. "I want ter have somethin' explained right here and now, boyees."

"Well, what is it?" asked Rough Rob, sullenly.

"Et is jest this hyer: I want ter know whar Poker Phil got so much money from all of a sudden. He has been bu'sted, or 'most so, fer a long time past."

"I suppose Phil can explain that," spoke Mayor Carleton, confidently.

"Ef he can't," persisted the man, "I want ter know ef et ain't part of ther money that was stolen from ther bank. Et hits me that it will be a good thing fer some one ter look into."

"That is something I do not propose to have anybody prying into," declared the sport, doggedly.

"As it is, and as you refuse to explain," said Willard Marblehead, stepping forward with a revolver presented, "I arrest you on suspicion of having had something to do with the robbery and murder at the bank."

Phil gave a start and recoiled.

"It is fortunate that I can prove where I was at the time of that crime," he said. "I was at the hotel, as Joe Garry here can testify."

"That is so," said Garry, "but you had better tell how this money came into your possession. It looks suspicious, to say the least. We can't blame the detective for arresting you on suspicion."

"Well, go ahead and make what you can out of it," growled the Poker Prince with a stubborn air.

"I thought it mighty queer that he had such a stake to play with," remarked Rough Rob, insinuatingly. "I have nothing to do with the thing, but I think if you can explain, Phil, you had better do it."

The prince was silent.

"He will have to explain," said Willard Marblehead, grimly. "Men, some of you go and bring Mrs. Grandis and her lawyer here. We must know more about this man, and they are the ones most likely to be able to give us the information we need."

"Don't bring that woman here," cried Phil.

"Go and bring her, and the lawyer, too," ordered Marblehead. "They are important witnesses. Tell them what is wanted of them."

"Yes, bring them, by all means," the mayor supported. "This thing must be cleared up."

"Who would have thought that suspicion would fall upon Poker Phil," observed Dunbar Kellock. "Young man, your silence argues against you."

"I suppose I may as well acknowledge the corn, then," was the sport's dogged retort. "I guess I'll let you go ahead and prove your case, though, since you have undertaken it."

The excitement was intense, but it was suppressed.

Men hastened off in search of the woman and her lawyer, and while their coming was awaited the detective held Phil under cover of his revolver.

Sir Clyde Carleton, Joe Garry, Old Avalanche, Billy Bucket, Johnny Smile, and others, were standing close around, and there was not the slightest chance for the prisoner to escape.

There was a buzz of comment going on around the room, the general belief seeming to be that the detective had made a mistake, but it could not be imagined how Phil had come to possess so much money. That was the one serious thing against him. It would have to be explained.

In due time the men returned, bringing with them the persons they had been sent after.

"What is the matter here?" asked the woman.

"Has that rascal confessed to the truth that he is Brent Grandis? If he has, I will make him toe the mark when I get him home—"

There was an interruption, and had a bomb exploded in their midst it could not have created greater consternation. Sir Clyde, Joe Garry, Avalanche, Billy, Johnny and others, even to Phil Harley, had whipped out weapons, and some persons found themselves covered.

The persons thus taken by surprise were—Dunbar Kellock, Rough Rob, Simon Singletree, Mrs. Grandis and Gentle Janie.

"Wh—what is the meaning of this?" cried Kellock.

"It will mean death to the first one of you who resists," declared Deadwood Dick, sternly. "You are under arrest for the robbery and—"

Like a tiger Rough Rob sprung upon him, and made an effort to force him to the wall in order to make his escape, but Robert met with a surprise, for, big as he was, Dick took him up and flopped him down upon the floor with ease.

"Not this time, I guess," Dick said.

"Great hambone, no!" cried Old Avalanche.

The old scout was now looking at Dick with intense scrutiny.

"Great ragin' and cavoortin' signs o' rantankerous demolishun!" he suddenly cried out.

"Do me eyes play me false? No! by ther djinted old hambone what made ther soup fer Jupiter, ef et ain't my own Dicky!"

"What!"

Dick removed his disguise with a sweep of the hand.

"Yes," he said, in his natural voice, "I am Deadwood Dick, whom these rascals defied, and I now hold them for the robbery of the bank and the murder of the cashier."

"It is false!" cried Kellock. "Sir Clyde, you know better than that. You know I was the first one to discover the deed, after it had been done, and that—"

"And that you had part in it," Deadwood Dick broke in. "I have not been idle, as you may have thought, but have been weaving a net around you out of which you will find it impossible to break."

Everybody in the place was wild at the revelation that had been made, and the uproar was great.

No chance was offered the guilty ones to escape, however, for those who held them under cover did not take their eyes off them for an instant, and now they proceeded to bind them, every one.

The news flew like the wind, and in a few minutes the Monte Carlo was densely packed with an excited crowd, every person eager to see Deadwood Dick and eager to hear what he had to say regarding the guilt of the prisoners. The Pocket had never seen a greater furor than this.

As soon as the prisoners had been made secure, Dick sprung upon a table and motioned

to the crowd to be silent, and as soon as he could make himself heard he addressed them.

"Friends and fellow-citizens of Pistol Pocket," he said, "it is with much pleasure that I find myself with you once more, here at this place which I call home. It is with even more pleasure that I am able to give you the solution the mystery of the robbery and the murder of poor Bordwell. These persons whom I have arrested are the ones guilty of the crimes."

"Lynch them!" some one shouted, and the cry was eagerly taken up.

Each of the prisoners, at the same time, was loudly proclaiming his or her innocence, and the confusion became great.

"No, they shall not be lynched," declared Dick, when he could again make himself heard.

"The law must have its full course in dealing with them. All we have to do is to hold them, hand them over to the officers, and present the proof of their guilt. The law will do the rest. I want it understood that this city of ours is to be a law-abiding place in all things. The days of Judge Lynch are past here, when the machinery of the law is working orderly and smoothly."

This carried weight with the better class.

"And now to lay before you the story of this crime, as I have worked it out and brought the proofs to bear against the guilty ones," Dick went on, presently. "It was planned months ago to rob the bank, and it has been a carefully worked scheme to the last, every detail having been provided for. This rascal, known to you as Dunbar Kellock, was at the head of it—Your interruptions will avail you nothing, sir. Your trial will give you every chance to have your say.—He was at the head of it, I say, and this man, Rough Rob, was his chief tool. They came here together about six months ago—"

"That's so! That's so!"

"Don't interrupt, please. They came here together, and while Keeter opened this place, with this woman as his helper, Kellock idled around the camp doing nothing, but boasting of what he would do after awhile. Their object from the first was to rob the bank, if not, indeed, to carry on a series of bold depredations, from which they would be reasonably secure from suspicion. They played their game slowly in order to make it a sure one. For six months they have been model citizens, apparently. That was to gain a reputation to shield them from suspicion. Then, when the time was ripe, the blow was struck, and it was so well done that they were almost secure from any chance of being suspected of it. But, as is usually the case, it was their very care and fine playing that betrayed them."

"My first clew was the finding of the three checks drawn by Keeter to the order of Brett, Fry, and Toole. That such fellows should be able to win from a professional seemed queer, and that Rough Rob should play with them at all, in the forenoon, was stranger still. I investigated, taking that as my starting point, and I have unearthed the whole mystery. Keeter played with these men purposely, and purposely lost to them. Then, at the right time to suit his plans, he stopped the play, and gave the checks upon the bank. They went out from the Monte Carlo in high glee, and went at once into the bank, next door, where they noisily presented their checks and asked for the money, laughing over their victory and jesting with each other, and while the attention of the cashier was being drawn to them this fellow, Rough Rob, climbed from a window of this building into a window of the bank, and concealed himself in the rear part of the office, till the time came to act."

There was a howl for vengeance, and Dick had to turn his weapons upon the crowd to hold them in check till he had done.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

As soon as he could make himself heard again Dick went on.

"In the mean time the ringleader of it all, this man Kellock, was across the way to give a signal when the most opportune moment came for the blow to be struck. He gave the signal, and Rough Rob crept out behind the cashier and was about to deal him a blow to render him senseless, when, the cashier turning his head and seeing him, he had to kill the man to insure his own safety. There is the man who did the deed," pointing straight at Rough Rob, "and here is the weapon with which he did it," drawing from under his coat a blunt hammer with a short handle. "The hammer and money were found together in a closet up-stairs"

in this building. Well you may quake, you wretch! there is no flaw in this proof. You defied Deadwood Dick, hoping to divert attention all the more from yourself and the rest of your evil crew, but you did not know the man with whom you had to deal. But, to return and keep events in order.

"The blow having been dealt, the robber gave his attention immediately to the safe, making all the haste he could and depending upon a signal from the man outside for his safety. He gathered up the money, stuffed it into a bag, and hurrying out, tossed it over into the open window of this building, where it was taken care of by his wife here, known to you as Gentle Janie. He made haste to follow the money, and when he had put himself beyond danger, then this man Kellock had an errand into the bank, where he was horrified at finding the cashier dead and the safe robbed. It is a wonder that he survived the shock it must have been to him. The rest of what took place you all know. I found these men, Brett and his companions, still had their money, and I gave them other money for it. The bills were new, and with the help of my allies I was able to compare them with this money Keeter had in his closet, of which this is a part which he has staked here to-night. The bills were of the same lot, and the proof in that direction was conclusive. It was I who supplied Poker Phil with the money to play to-night, so that some of this money could be drawn out in plain sight of all, and here it is. Step forward, gentlemen, and examine the bills, comparing them with these which were last paid out by the dead cashier. Do you want further proof? And this woman, Mrs. Grandis, and her lawyer, Singletree, are accomplices who came at this time for the sole purpose of carrying away the greater part of the stolen funds. It is even now in their room. This by-play of theirs was only for effect. Are you convinced?"

No further proof was asked, and Dick could say no more, for the crowd was wild for lynching the guilty man, but Dick and those around him carried the point and the prisoners were hurried into a rear room and put under a guard for safety for the time being.

Followed then such a scene as baffles description, almost, and to quote the excited sayings of Old Avalanche alone would be to carry our story over into another number. The old scout went nearly crazy over the affair, and the neat way in which his "Dicky" had brought it to an ending. And it was pardonable, too, and he was not the only one who showed enthusiasm.

On the following day the funeral of the dead man took place, and the whole camp turned out to show respect to the good man who had been a friend to all. After that the prisoners were taken away under guard, and were turned over to the proper authorities and duly charged with the crimes for which they were responsible. In due time their trial came off, when they were found guilty and every one was sent to meet the fate the law prescribed. Deadwood Dick had done his work so well that there could be no question or doubt.

Deadwood Dick settled down to stay awhile at Pistol Pocket, to get everything in proper order and to make for himself a permanent home. A splendid house was speedily erected, into which Dick moved with his happy wife, and upon which occasion the young city let itself loose to give a jubilee in his honor. And they did it, too. But, later on came another occasion for rejoicing, when bonny Kate gave to her husband a son, whose name was called Deadwood D. Bristol. Then it was that Pistol Pocket made such a demonstration as had never been known before in its history. And, needless to say, Dick and Kate were the proudest, happiest couple to be found anywhere. Later on the name of the place was changed to Bristol City, and there is Dick's home. And there is Dick, the Prince of Pistol Pocket, with the income of a millionaire, and there, but for his passion for the danger and excitement of detective life, he might live in peace and quiet the rest of his days. But, that was not to be. It was not for him. It would be to break the oath he had so solemnly taken. No; the near future had further adventures in store for him, and he was soon to be called from this veritable Paradise of love and beauty to face again the monsters Vice and Crime, to bring evil-doers to justice. If he had been a scourge to them before, and his name their dread, what would he be to them now, with almost unlimited wealth at his command? Let us end by saying—Long live Deadwood Dick, Junior!

THE END.

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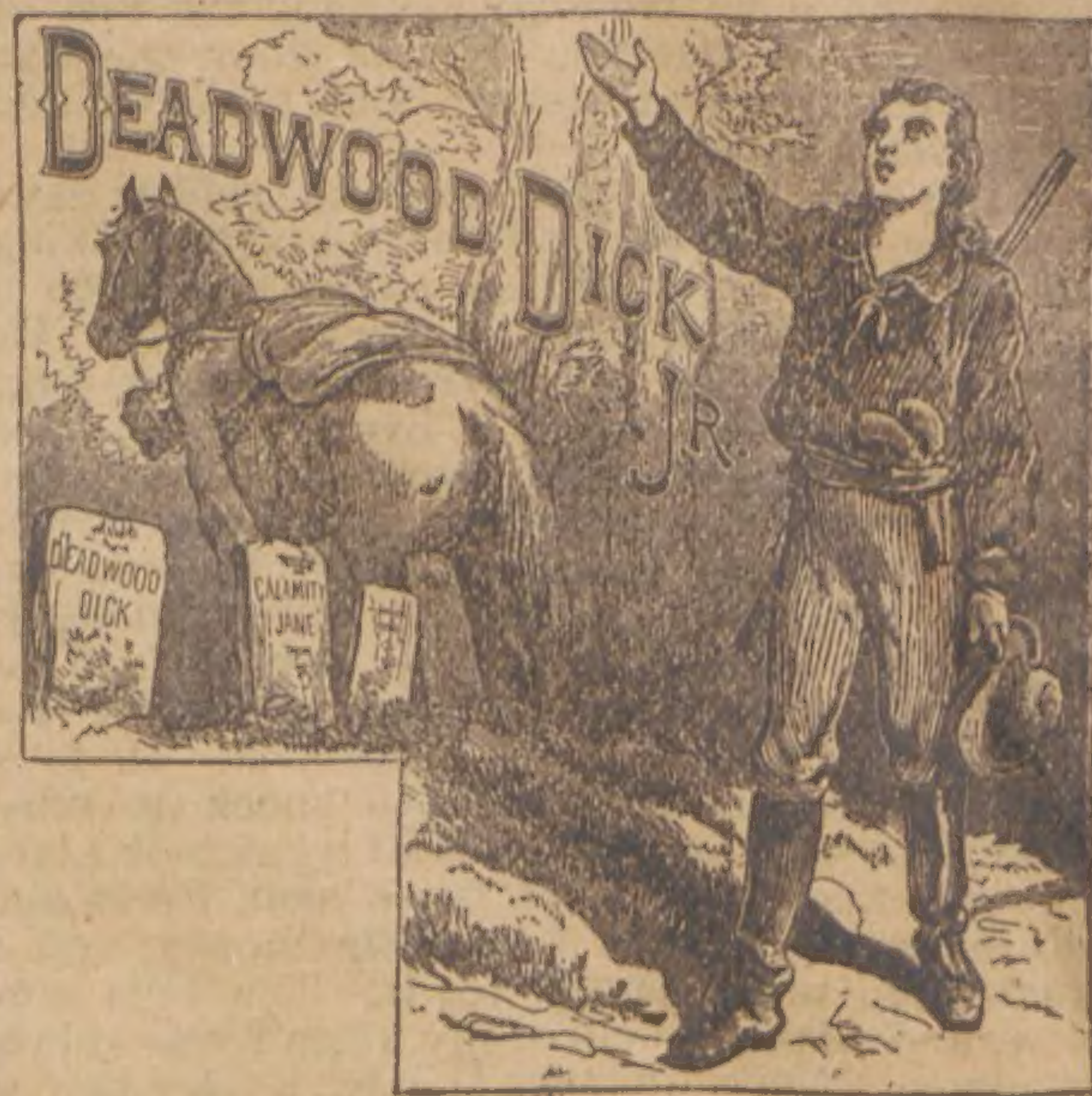
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